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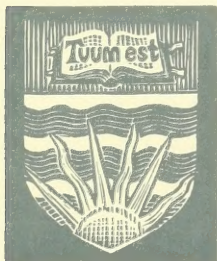


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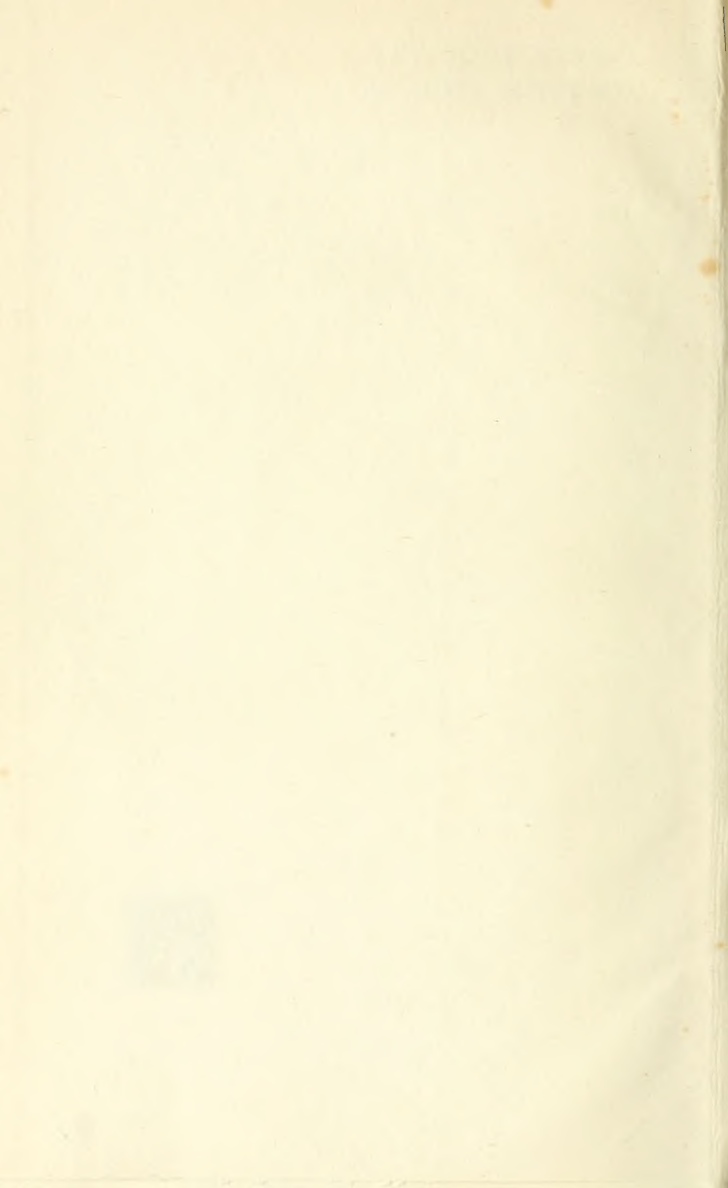


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CONTEMPORARY  
SCOTTISH STUDIES





# CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH STUDIES

*FIRST SERIES*

BY

C. M. GRIEVE

LONDON

LEONARD PARSONS  
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## CHAPTER ONE.

### INTRODUCTORY.

"Let the Scotsman be content, as I think he generally is, to be a Scotsman," enjoined the Prime Minister (Mr Stanley Baldwin) recently. But it all depends on what connotation is attached to the term "Scotsman," as to whether such contentment is desirable in the interests of Scotsmen themselves and their country, and European arts and affairs generally—or, merely, as some of us think, in the interests of Englishmen and of those Anglo-Scots who have sold their birthright for an (admittedly substantial) mess of pottage. To determine this it is necessary to examine the ethos of Scotland to-day; to enquire into the contemporary and, generally, post-Union contribution of Scotland to world culture; to institute comparisons between the stock-conceptions of things Scottish to-day and the qualities which manifested themselves in Scotland before the Union—even to consider anew what really is the chief End of Man and, more particularly, the best possible destiny that Scotland can secure, or, at least, plan and purpose for itself. There is an anecdote of Big Mac, who declared, "One thing I do thank God for—I'm a Scotsman," and Little Dick, who retorted, "That shows a nice forgiving spirit anyhow." For other reasons than perhaps actuate the majority of my countrymen I can heartily enough second Big Mac's sentiment, but, on the other hand, I am not of a forgiving disposition, and there are many directions in which I would fain make sure of being able to accommodate the Deity with a better grace than I can yet command. These essays are part and parcel of an endeavour to encompass that object.

## CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH STUDIES

They originally appeared in *The Scottish Educational Journal* (commencing in May, 1925), to the editor of which I here tender the customary acknowledgments. Appearing in his pages had both its advantages and its disadvantages—and, so far as presenting them now in book form goes, the latter greatly outweigh the former. They did not always appear weekly; the General Strike caused a hiatus—these and other causes necessitated a good deal of repetition. The type was kept standing; and the articles appear here practically in their original form. Nor does this book comprise the entire series of 52 articles embraced in my arrangement with *The Scottish Educational Journal*. Sixteen of these have not yet appeared at this time of writing and are not included. Nor was that series as originally planned sufficiently comprehensive to effect my purpose. I therefore now propose to make this volume a First Series; and to devote a second volume to another series, which will include the sixteen articles above-mentioned and another fourteen which I now consider necessary. Some of the persons or issues which I have thus left over, however, I have touched upon in my concluding chapter, just to show that I have them in mind. In addition to what I say there I must frankly admit here that I regret that I have not had space in this first volume to deal with the art of Duncan Grant, J. D. Fergusson, S. J. Peploe, and one or two others (my regret is mitigated in the cases of Muirhead Bone, James M'Bey, Sir D. Y. Cameron, and several more, by the facts that they are already at least sufficiently well-known and that my criticism of them would have been much more adverse than in these other cases); the sculpture of William Lamb and Benno Schotz; the typographical genius of James Guthrie; the terpsichorean genius of Isadora Duncan; the pianistic genius of Frederick Lamond; the place in German, and European, letters of that extraordinary "translated" Scot, John Henry Mackay; the Credit Reform proposals of Major C. H. Douglas; the personality of Willa Muir, whom I consider to be the most brilliant of living Scotswomen; the polyglot powers of the veteran Principal Sir Donald MacAlister, to whose Russian translations *The Slavonic Review* recently paid a well-deserved compliment; the scholarship and critical power of Professor H. J. C. Grierson; the epigrammatic faculty of Lord Dewar; the anecdotal prowess of the Marquis of

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Aberdeen and Temair and his peer, Sir James Taggart, and, along with them perhaps, the Marquis of Huntley; the—what can I call it?—of the Countess of Oxford; the philosophies of the Earl of Balfour, Lord Haldane, Professors Pringle Pattison and J. Y. Simpson; the political importance of James Maxton and John Wheatley; the influence of Professor J. S. Phillimore; the diverse work of such men as the veteran Professor Patrick Geddes, Professor J. Arthur Thompson, Professor Allardyce Nicoll, Ramsay Macdonald, J. L. Baird (with his invention of "television"), Sir D. M. Stevenson, Martin Anderson ("Cynicus"), David Alec. Wilson (the monumental biographer of Carlyle), and Allan Barns Graham; the comedic talent of Will Fyffe, if not of Sir Harry Lauder—all these, at least, one would fain have taken in at a first glance over the field of contemporary Scottish Arts and affairs. There are many others who bulk largely whose proportions one would fain have reduced to make more perceptible the worthier figures they are obscuring; these I need not mention here.

But while these articles were being written others with whom I would, or should, have dealt have been removed by death and so have fallen outwith my range. I regret especially that a volume of mine dealing so largely with Scottish letters should have had no more than merely passing references to William Archer, W. P. Ker, Roger Quinn, Duncan M'Naught, Hector Macpherson, Theodore Napier, and, to go further back, Thomas Common, the translator of Nietzsche—for one of the difficulties I have encountered lies in the fact that a leeway extending over decades has been established so that when men such as some of these (Common, for example) die they do not take the place in our history they deserve—they lapse into a limbo and the impression of Scottish life and letters over the period to which they belonged which any stranger, or, for the matter of that, without independent and difficult research, any Scot can secure is merely one of chaos in which even sizeable names fail to appear except from any but the Kailyaird angle, which throws into grotesque disproportion either the wrong people or, infrequently, the wrong aspects of the right people. Of these more recent dead I should have liked in particular to have dealt at some length with James Mavor, and, above all, James Murdoch, the historian of Japan, that extraordinary man,

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at one time a Professor of Greek, at another a member of a communist colony in Paraguay, and finally a recluse in Japan (although he died in Australia) but, as a recent writer has put it, "still the cottar's son, even to the woollen 'gravat' round his neck." As typical, and infinitely more valuable, a Scot than Sir Harry Lauder or the late Andrew Carnegie!

Not only are there such omissions, then, in these pages, but I am acutely conscious that readers who are not Scots—and, to scarcely any less a degree, readers who are Scots—will seldom be able to supply the appropriate background to what I write. There is an unbridged gulf. It is impossible without specialised study to connect up such modern issues as these with which I am dealing with a sense of Scottish continuity. Even in Scotland the history of the country, either in its cultural or other aspects, is almost wholly unappreciated; the most ludicrous misapprehensions as to the history of slightly more remote periods are prevalent (*The Scottish Historical Review* in one recent issue destroyed no fewer than three long-standing mistakes in regard to Scottish History); and in regard to current affairs journalism, politics, and other factors are so disposed as to engage Scottish minds with anything and everything rather than a good all-round view of their own national position. The process of assimilation inherent in the terms of the Treaty of Union—and accelerated by means which were in violation of such safeguarding clauses as the Treaty did contain—has made it practically impossible for the majority even of Scottish people, living in Scotland, to "think Scottish." Space was not allowed me here to effectively fill in the great majority of these blanks—to relate such things as the so-called "Irish Invasion" of Scotland (destined in my opinion to be the best thing that has happened to it for over 200 years at least), the emergence of the "Glasgow Reds," the depopulation of the Highlands and Islands, the tyrannous and demoralising centripetalism of London, the Rosyth scandal, and so forth, to each other and to a comprehensive national programme—let alone setting them in their historical perspective, a process which, had I begun it, would have led me to fall foul of history as it is taught in Scottish schools, whether as Scottish History or English History, or European History, almost in its entirety. Nor, in so far as aesthetic and cultural



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issues were concerned, could I use the illustrations or indicate the ideas which I would have used or indicated had I been writing for a public who are not soon out of their depth in the veriest shallows of modern, or, indeed, any literature or ideology. The Scottish teaching profession—to whom *The Scottish Educational Journal* appeals—are on the whole the best educated and most open-minded reading public available in Scotland: but literature with the exception of those writers whom it is educational practice in Scottish schools to regard as classics and a certain proportion of the more popular writers of the day (that is to say English, or, in an odd case, French writers, along with a few recollections of chance reading outwith the beaten track in College days) is outwith their ken, and the same applies to art, music, and affairs—except perhaps E.I.S. affairs. In these circumstances I was severely handicapped, and it is only fair to myself that I should say so. Nor was my task lightened by an occasional bit of moral censorship; my article on Muriel Stuart, for example, would have been rather longer but for the excision of a passage in which I examined a quotation from her poems alongside one of Milton's. Both dealt with Sex; and this volume ought certainly to have had an article on The Sexual History of Scotland. The Scottish atmosphere will not be effectively improved until our tacit Comstockery—with which, in a more explicit form in America, H. L. Mencken deals so effectively—has been dragged out into the light and examined unflinchingly.

Perhaps the greatest omission in this volume is an adequate account of the contemporary Gaelic movement and of contemporary Gaelic literature. On the whole, however, it may be said that Gaelic letters to-day are pretty much in the position of Braid Scots letters—whatever is being done, except in rare instances, has practically no purely literary or artistic value. It is done in the traditional forms and lacks the breath of life—the contemporary application. It is not joining issue with Scottish life to-day in any way. In Gaelic drama recently rather more is being done; and certainly one great play has been produced, far greater than any in Braid Scots or English by any living Scots dramatist—"Crois-Tara!" (The Fiery Cross, a play of the time of the '45) by Domhnall Mac-na-Ceardadh, who has also written distinguished verse. Other living Gaelic dramatists are

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Eachann MacDhughail, John W. Macleod, Mairi A. Chaimbeul, and John Maccormick, who has also written a Gaelic novel, a real heroic tale, in "Dun-Aluinn," as has Angus Robertson in his "An t-Ogha Mor" (1913). But I have not dealt with modern Gaelic letters here—or the work of An Comunn Gaidhealach—because to do so would have involved raising all manner of questions which could only have been dealt with adequately in a book devoted to themselves. The position and prospects of modern Gaelic literature can only be appreciated in the light of a knowledge of the cultural traditions of the Gaels and to that—vital as it is to any thought of a big Scottish Renaissance Movement and the re-establishment of an independent Scottish nation—the majority of the issues with which I have chosen to deal in the meantime have only an ultimate relationship. I have, however, dealt with issues which, concerning as they do the majority of the people now living in Scotland, are, in my opinion, preliminary to any effective re-emergence either in the political or cultural fields of the Gaelic elements, or, to use a better phrase, our Gaelic background.

It is in the nature of things, too, that some of the parts of these chapters are already behind the times. Developments have taken place in the interval between their appearance in *The Scottish Educational Journal* and here. William Jeffrey, for example, has strengthened his position greatly with his "The Doom of Atlas" (Gowans and Gray, 1926) and more recent poems. Lewis Spence is heading a new Scottish National Movement which is developing promisingly in certain districts. And so on. Details such as these could be multiplied. Perhaps the most important thing is the successful development of a social side to the Scottish Renaissance Movement in entertainments similar in kind to those given by the Sitwell Group in the New Chenil Galleries in London. In Burgess Scott the Movement has found an artiste capable of "putting over" the new products in Scottish Poetry and Music to a wide public. Personal contact is a great solvent of the difficulties of new techniques, and Mrs Scott's singing is likely to evoke an immediate response on the part of the public which may have important results. Hitherto the difficulty has been to get an artiste who would risk novel numbers instead of playing to the gallery with old favourites, and, in the case of F. G. Scott's song

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settings this was accentuated by their demand for a dramatic rendition running counter to the determination of almost all singers to preserve a "beautiful vocal line." Joseph Hislop, J. A. Campbell, Roy Henderson and other Scottish singers who ought to be singing Scott's songs presumably will not do it for these two reasons. So far he has not found a male interpreter; that is to say that the best of his work has never been sung in public. Miss Boyd Steven sang a few of his songs very successfully; Miss Ursula Greville in New York and elsewhere was even more successful. Miss Helen Henschell, the distinguished auto-accompanist, would probably prove an ideal exponent of them. So does Mrs Scott.

Another development—to the debit rather than the credit side of the Movement—is the reversion of Mr D. Glen Mackemmie from the Chairmanship to the Secretaryship of the Scottish National Players, and the probability that a return to repertory is intended. Little although the S.N.P. have done for Scottish drama—and little though they seemed likely to do—this is unfortunate. It means that those who have hitherto put the object of achieving a Scottish National Drama first have given way to those whose position is that "We are only too anxious for Scottish Drama—if we can get it—but we are not going to prefer nationalism to art." It does not seem to occur to these people that that is precisely what they are doing—other people's nationalism, which has produced art, as Scottish nationalism can do, in its own, probably very different, way, only if there is adequate concentration on that object and on the overcoming of whatever has prevented its development in the past.

The whole position, which this book has been written to manifest, is excellently summarised by Mr Lewis Spence in a recent letter to the Press, in the course of which he says:—"I advocate the employment and teaching of the Scots Vernacular side by side with standard English, not as a substitute for it. All Scottish people should be bilingual. If they were the general verbal stock would be immensely enriched, and in any case Scots is the true and natural psychological language of North Britain. It has been observed a hundred times by competent critics that no Scotsman can ever acquire an irreproachable grasp of English as a spoken or written language. . . . What Mr Grieve and I do desire is to see a new psychological

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approach manifested in Scots verse. During the last quarter of a century Scottish literature has done little to attract the attention of the world of culture. It has certainly failed to appeal to European imagination as the Irish or Norwegian literatures have appealed. The crass sentimentalities and utter banalities of the Kailyaird School alienated from the first sympathies of critics of taste and insight. Scotsmen of perspicacity and experience could not but feel depressed at the popular vogue of a cult which they were aware frequently afforded only a base caricature of their countrymen, paving the way for the grosser tradition of Lauderism. Nor to Scotsmen of liberal views did the somewhat artless impulse to concentrate the entire literary thought and homage of the nation upon the achievement of Robert Burns, however great, appear as likely to be conducive to the healthy or catholic expansion of Scottish literary life or activity. Those of them, more familiar with the genius and tradition of the older and more courtly Scottish poets, Douglas, Hendryson, Dunbar, and Lyndesay, and with the tradition, magical and intense, of the northern balladeers, recognised in these a spirit as genuinely native and technically more worthy of affection and close study than the mark of their successors. While worshipping Burns, 'this side idolatry,' they wholeheartedly detested the host of uninspired plagiarists who succeeded him and deplored the descent of Scottish poetry into an abyss of infamous cliché and mechanical reiteration. It was, indeed, inevitable that the whole race of poetasters should have misconstrued and misapprehended the essentials of the Burnsian composition, confounding as they did an inspired simplicity, a great lyric artlessness, with mere banality. Incapable of discerning the true merits of a tonic gift, the quality of which probably remains unsurpassed, they laboured under the delusion that anything couched in Scots must naturally possess an equal excellence with the effortless cadences of a great natural artist, who sang as spontaneously and with all the perfervid enchantment of a thrush in a morning garden. From the death of Burns to the end of the late War may, perhaps, be regarded as the most jejune and uninspired period in Scottish letters. Not only was it parasitical to a great name in a manner that scarcely any other literature can ever have been, its history was almost utterly devoid of those frequent regroupings and reorienta-

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tions of the literary elements which are regarded by the superficial as the manifestations of originality; for, though 'originality' is actually incapable of attainment, the surest sign of artistic vitality is its endeavour. This, within the period alluded to, was almost wholly invisible, and old men, and some young ones, maundered on in the Burns tradition. But 'the War changed all that.' It achieved what nothing else could have achieved, because it removed for a while large numbers of Scots from the Caledonian scene, and permitted them a view of a larger world; and this estrangement had the effect it ever has on the Scottish mind—a marked quickening of the patriotic sense, mingled with a desire for new things." It is with these post-War developments—and the way in which what preceded them in regard to Scottish arts and affairs during the past two or three decades appears in the light of these developments—that I am concerned here. This is the first book devoted to contemporary Scottish literature, except a small volume published in 1917 by W. M. Parker devoted to short studies of twelve authors, eight of whom are dead and therefore outwith my range. I would also draw attention, however, to an important article on the subject: "Le Groupe de 'la Renaissance Ecossaie,'" by Professor Denis Saurat, now of London University, which appeared in the *Revue Anglo-Américaine* in April, 1924; to a later and more comprehensive study, which appeared under the title of "Bokmentavakningin skoza" in the January-March, 1926, issue of the Icelandic quarterly, *Eimreidin*, by Alexander M'Gill, who is rapidly taking the place in regard to Scandinavian studies of the late W. P. Ker, and who has written, in his recent Fanad studies, some of the most delightful descriptive prose by any modern Scottish writer; to the articles in recent (1925 and 1926) issues of *The Scots Magazine* on Contemporary Scottish authors by Marion Lochhead and on recent developments of Scottish poetry by Charles Graves, himself a young poet of distinction, whose first book, "The Bamboo Grove" (Cape) attracted much favourable attention; to the penetrating article on "The Scottish Literary Renaissance" by Lewis Spence in the (July, 1926) *Nineteenth Century and After*; and to the exceedingly able and dynamic study of "Scottish Poetry of To-day" in the *Burns Chronicle* (which has taken a new lease of life, and re-oriented itself, to accord with a cult which is rapidly



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ceasing to be merely convivial and antiquarian and becoming a literary and nationalist movement, under the editorship of Mr J. C. Ewing) of 1916 by Robert Bain, the Poetry Critic of the *Glasgow Herald*, to which he has long contributed much of the very finest appreciation and analysis of contemporary verse to be found anywhere.

In conclusion here, I would say that I have not been able to ascertain whether Roy Campbell, the author of "The Flaming Terrapin," is a Scotsman or not; and that I have been unable to devote any attention to American and Colonial writers of Scottish descent or any consideration to the Scottish elements in such English poets as Gordon Bottomley, Lascelles Abercrombie, and Walter de la Mare.

## CHAPTER TWO.

JOHN BUCHAN.

The title of John Buchan, son of the manse, barrister-at-law, managing director of Messrs. Thos. Nelson & Sons, Ltd., fisher, deer-stalker, and mountaineer, to be regarded in his fiftieth year as Dean of the Faculty of Contemporary Scottish Letters cannot be contested—despite the fact that he is only incidentally a man of letters, a finding with which he would himself, I am sure, readily enough concur, although it may seem not unlike the *Athenæum's* remark that “upon the whole, we do not think the short story represents Mr Conrad’s true *métier*,” which drew from Arnold Bennett the comment that “it may be that Mr Conrad’s true *métier*, was, after all, that of an auctioneer; but, after ‘Youth,’ ‘To-morrow,’ ‘Typhoon,’ ‘Karain,’ ‘The End of the Tether,’ and half-a-dozen other mere masterpieces, he may congratulate himself on having made a fairly successful hobby of the short story.” Mr Buchan has, during his short life, somehow found time to make fairly successful hobbies of almost every branch of literature. A bibliography of his work would range through practically every field of letters and into strange places inhabited by what Charles Lamb calls *biblia a biblia*. And yet (though the conceptions of Bohemia may belong to the past, and “Jack of all trades” is certainly a phrase rendered utterly inapplicable by the excellence of his writing in every direction his pen has taken him, and one, moreover, that misses the point of the failure that lies at the heart of his work by a thousand miles) what real author could ever give as his clubs: Alpine, Union, Poli-

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tical Economy? Many good people in Scotland who do not know what poetry is (few do!) regard him as a distinguished poet: he is, of course, under no such illusion himself. He won the Newdigate at Oxford—Euterpe's chosen have always very other fish to fry at competition-times. That he is, all the same, one of the three or four most accomplished versifiers of contemporary Scotland proves nothing but our country's singular poverty of poets—and the fact that I personally prefer his work (when I am not speaking *ex cathedra*) to almost the whole body of "Georgian Poetry" is irrelevant. Actually he is pretty much on the level of John Drinkwater—who will occupy an inconspicuous enough place in the literary history of England—but, in his vernacular verse, he reaches a somewhat higher plane. I agree, for example, with Professor A. M. Clark, that "one of the most truthful of all the war poems is a poignantly sincere utterance in dialect of the love of home, no vague patriotism or imperialism, but the love of one's own folk and nook of the hills. It is Mr Buchan's *Home Thoughts from Abroad*." His *Fisher Jamie* will live with *The Whistle* and *Tam o' the Kirk* as a little classic of Doric verse.

Professor Clark's reference is one of the few to Buchan in books on contemporary literature, and he has curiously enough been even more completely disregarded in Scots manuals than in English. W. M. Parker's "Modern Scots Writers" (1917) dealt with twelve men—Andrew Lang, R.L.S., William Sharp ("Fiona Macleod"), Sir James Barrie, Professor W. P. Ker, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, Kenneth Grahame, Sir George Douglas, William Archer, R. B. Cunninghame-Graham, John Davidson, George Douglas Brown—only four of whom survive. John Buchan, with Neil Munro, should certainly have been included in that gallery; their absence is unaccountable. The omission of neither is explained by the author's prefatorial remark that "one or two writers are excluded for the reason that they are not modern in outlook; some have been left out of account, either because their reputations are not firmly established, or their works are not of sufficient importance to warrant consideration." On the first count none of the twelve—except Archer and Cunninghame Graham—were "modern" in any sense in 1917: Buchan is in every respect as "modern" as any of them ever were except Davidson and Brown. His re-

## JOHN BUCHAN.

putation is—and was then—as well established as that of any of them save R.L.S. and, perhaps, Barrie. And Robertson Nicoll never wrote anything of the slightest—other than commercial—importance. Barrie alone is just mentioned in Henderson's "Scottish Vernacular Literature" (1910), but, although Buchan had not then published his "Poems Scots and English," he is one of some half-a-dozen who within the next few years called for no little modification of the concluding sentence of that excellent book which declares that "as regards vernacular poetry, his (Burns's) death was really the setting of the sun; the twilight deepened very quickly; and such twinkling lights as from time to time appear only serve to disclose the darkness of the all-encompassing night." When a new day is indisputably dawning we can afford to smile at the resignation of those who regarded the nightfall as the end of the world! It was, of course, impossible at that time to foresee that fourteen years later Buchan was to perform a very notable service by issuing "The Northern Muse," which stands in relation to Scots poetry as Palgrave's "Golden Treasury" to English, and is in every respect worthy to sit cheek-by-jowl with the latter: a labour of love, equipped with a delightful apparatus of notes which shows what a fine, and so far as Scots letters are concerned hitherto quite unequalled, critic (conservative albeit rather than creative) other, and less necessitous, branches of literature have so largely denied us in this Admirable Crichton: a definitive book, supplying a long-felt want in a fashion that seems likely to give such an impetus to Scottish poetry that it will stand as a landmark in our literary history not far from the beginning of what seems destined to be known as the period of our National Renaissance. It was, indeed, compiled in the renaissance spirit—literary merit being the criterion of selection. It was not too rigorously applied, perhaps, but Buchan thus quietly, but decisively, aligned himself with the younger men who were clamouring for the erection of literary standards in Scotland comparable to those obtaining elsewhere. It will probably be unique among his works in its effect. His influence otherwise has been almost wholly social, only very obliquely, if at all, cultural, and never literary. Professor Gregory Smith's "Scottish Literature" (1919) does not mention him either—or any other living writer save Barrie and Neil Munro—but then his book is

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a brilliant bit of special pleading on behalf of certain theories of Scots letters capable of being applied and extended in ways of which he did not wot: and certainly in his concluding section, "A Modern Epilogue," he was driven from excellent premises to false conclusions by his failure to more than casually allude to John Davidson, Robert Buchanan, George Douglas Brown, and "Fiona Macleod" (to name no more) and his total ignoring of Cunninghame Graham, Buchan, Charles Murray, Mrs Violet Jacob, and others. Much, however, can be forgiven to the man who declared that "we rule out the whole company of 'stickit ministers' and all the things done and said within reach of the 'bonnie brier bush.'"

Buchan bulks most largely in the public eye as a novelist, no doubt. It has been well said that, with the brilliant exception of Sir A. T. Quiller Couch, he has inherited more of the Stevensonian spirit and tradition than any other modern writer, although with more classical restraint. I am not surprised, however, that he is not mentioned in Gerald Gould's "Contemporary English Novel." The interpretation of that statement depends upon how one rates the Stevensonian spirit and tradition. If I had been going to write essays on the fifty principal English (or British) novelists, Quiller-Couch's name would not have occurred to me; nor Mr Buchan's. Living Scottish novelists would be another matter in which Buchan would deserve a very substantial chapter to himself. But this is only another way of saying that the novel in Scotland is on a plane where molehills are mountains. I can agree with all the grateful things that can be said about Buchan's novels: I owe them many happy hours: but it is essential despite one's private likes and dislikes to preserve a sense of proportion: some people apply such adjectives to Buchan that one wonders how their stock would last out if they had to deal with the literary world as a whole. (After all these *are* the days of relativity—but nothing that I am saying gainsays the fact that Buchan's books abound in loving and delightful studies of Scottish landscape and shrewd analyses and subtle aperçus of Scottish character, and are, of course, indispensable *en bloc* to every Scottish library and *seriatim* to every Scottish reader worthy of the name. Only——!) In our literary history Buchan as a novelist will be of the respectable but unexciting company of James Grant, William Black, and George



## JOHN BUCHAN.

Macdonald—well above the Crocketts and Ian Maclarens. His fiction well deserves its vogue: would that many whose popularity is greater wrote half so well. But that is saying little! And very moderately-sized in the British scale, his work as a novelist disappears entirely in the light of European assessment. There are no doubt worthy folk who regard *Chambers's Journal* as an organ of culture; Reginald Bickley's remark in a "*Bookman*" essay that "in his own peculiar manner Buchan is probably the best modern exponent of the short story" must have been designed for the consumption of such, if (for it is most ambiguously framed) it means what it appears to mean. Even if it only means that Buchan excels in the particular type of short story he writes it shows a remarkable ignorance of the modern short story of (for so this journalist correctly enough classifies Buchan's work) "the classical-romantic school, with all its restraint and severity of style; its poise and balance; the coldness even of its romance; the clear-cut concise phrase." If he meant that Buchan was the best contemporary British exponent of a demoded form he was right; as again he would have been had he termed him the best living Scottish short story writer (leaving out the "new hands" who are just beginning to be noticed). In an intermediate and very interesting form the present writer must confess an abiding predilection for "*A Lodge in the Wilderness*"; dated, and in some ways badly, though the speculations are in that very dissimilar variant of "*The New Republic*."

There remain, chief amongst the remainder, Buchan the biographer, the historian, the essayist, and—the man. His work as biographer stands between (but well to the good side!) Lytton Strachey's and the conventional biography he trounced. It lacks the verbal and stylistic brilliance—and also the malice—of the new mode; but it is high above the ruck, in an air of integrity and excellent commonsense, devoid of dullness, of its own. "*The Marquis of Montrose*" should certainly be read by every Scot. As a war historian he accomplished a *tour de force*: his work is far better than most war histories—in its handling of the stupendous masses of fact, in its lucid exposition of the factors in play, in its general balance and tone; but in the nature of things it could only serve as a useful contemporary outline (a means of seeing the wood despite the trees), and have little, if any, permanent value. The

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way in which he carried through his tremendous task, however, illustrated his wonderful capacity of organisation and his resource in affairs. His essays are the most delightful written by any contemporary Scot.

The man himself, with this great tale of work to his credit, is utterly unspoiled: and his best is probably yet to come. Mr Bickley has said that "he has but to weave some of the joy and laughter of his own sunny personality into his work to reach that wider public that demands that an author shall amuse as well as enthrall." I venture to hope that his aim shall be not to reach that wider public but the smaller one which matters infinitely more. It is true that "we still wait for the great work, the more ambitious flight of his matured imagination"—he can well afford to shed some of his present popularity and bigger sales should certainly be his last objective—and, if I may suggest a clue to his comparative failure and the means whereby he may yet redeem it, it will be *via* the advice, opposite to that usually given which has betrayed many a splendid Scot, "to haud *North*," for, just as R.L.S. is indubitably best the "Scotcher" he is, so John Buchan may well find that his sister, better known as "O. Douglas," gave him a true hint as to the direction along which he may yet realise his undoubted genius when, addressing the Vernacular Circle of the London Burns Club, she said that "if we lose our old Scottish tongue we lose our biggest and best chance in literature."

*John Buchan's books include:—*Novels, *John Burnet of Barns, Prester John, Salute to Adventurers, The Thirty-nine Steps, Greenmantle*; Short Stories, *Grey Weather, The Watcher by the Threshold, The Moon Endureth*; Essays, *Scholar Gipsies, Some Eighteenth Century Byways*; Politics and Travel, *The African Colony, A Lodge in the Wilderness*; History and Biography, *Sir Walter Raleigh, The Marquis of Montrose, A History of the War*; Poetry, *Poems Scots and English, The Northern Muse (Anthology), etc., etc.*

*Mr Bickley's article referred to appeared in The Bookman Special Xmas Number, 1912.*

## CHAPTER THREE.

SIR J. M. BARRIE.

In the essay on Charlie Chaplin in the "Fourth Series" of his "Contemporary Portraits," Frank Harris reports Chaplin as saying, while talking of a visit to London, "Oh! I saw Barrie—Sir James Barrie; he is getting old and takes himself very seriously. He criticised my 'Kid,' telling me that all the heavenly part was nonsensical, 'absurd and worthless.'" "The author of 'Peter Pan,'" added Chaplin, with dancing eyes again, "the inventor of the crocodile with the clock in its stomach, seemed to think my scene in Heaven absurd and therefore worthless, as if the two adjectives were synonymous," and Charlie grinned again. Chaplin has got a smile that not only lights up his eyes and mouth, but lights up the man he is talking about with irresistible kindly mockery. Of course, everybody knows perfectly well that the absurdities of "Peter Pan" have made Barrie a millionaire!—and certainly there are elements in Barrie, and these the elements which have won him his world-fame and his wealth, which cannot be adequately treated save with irresistible, if kindly mockery! The "bipsychic duality" Barrie has invented for himself, christening one-half Maconochie, only serves to throw into clearer relief the incompatible elements so curiously associated in his life—but however psychologically amusing it may be such a juxtaposition establishes an internal dichotomy which is the antithesis of genius. That a house so divided against itself can really stand is against nature: literary history is, however, full of examples of the achievement of a temporary equilibrium which, for the

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time being, succeeded famously and gave all the appearance of permanent success. But once such a Humpty-Dumpty falls, as fall it must, not all the king's horses and all the king's men can set it up again—although, to be sure, clever press-agents may succeed for an indeterminate period in continuing to make the Great Public believe that it has not fallen, and cannot fall, but remains *in situ* and intact.

The literary world is an amusing place. A highly-diverting light shoots out obliquely and irradiates Barrie's shrinking little figure from such a sentence as this of Arnold Bennett's: "I see that Dr Robertson Nicoll has just added to his list of patents by inventing Leonard Merrick, whom I used to admire in print long before Dr Nicoll had ever heard that Mr J. M. Barrie regarded Leonard Merrick as the foremost English novelist." Critical ability is certainly the last quality that need be looked for in Barrie; and, above all, self-criticism. My own opinion would be frankly that it is unfortunate that he ever turned to drama—were it not that despite certain rare elements of psychologising subtlety in "Tommy and Grizel" (which I hold to be by far his most interesting, characteristic and promising work—albeit the promise has never been redeemed), I am by no means sure that even so he would have made sufficiently good in a literary sense to counterbalance the monetary and other sacrifices he would undoubtedly have made. On the whole, I am afraid that—since the choice must be made—in preferring mammon to God Barrie has not refused services of any very particular value to the latter: the regrettable thing is that he has contributed so powerfully to the former. In other words, there is little to choose between Macconochie and Barrie. I have no difficulty, of course, in going so far as Miss Agnes Stewart, who says that Barrie's "characters have more individuality than those of the average 'Kailyairder.'" Quite: but that is to say—what? I cannot accord any very high place save in the restricted field of Scottish letters either to Neil Munro or to Barrie: but the fact that the former is more exclusively Scottish, and that in respect of certain portions of his mixed output the latter has secured world-fame, only need to be analysed by anyone who knows anything about contemporary circulations qualitatively to show why a certain meed of respect cannot be denied to the former, to which the latter is

entirely unentitled. Even in times such as the present, I am sure that no writer worth his salt would not rather have "failed" with Neil Munro than "succeeded" with Barrie.

I must leave it to Mr W. M. Parker and his like—they have the satisfaction of knowing that an infinitely greater public than any I appeal to will endorse their views, and even admire their manner of expression—to write this sort of thing: "They say he came from Kirriemuir, N.B., and he himself even hints at it, but we know differently—don't we? Fifty-seven years ago, forsooth, why 'tis only twelve years since he fell to earth with his brother snowflakes. What a pure and delicately scooped-out snowflake he is too!" This is the sort of thing that is instantly accepted by the Big Public as exceedingly clever literary criticism. It is, of course, fudge! There are certain styles in which it is impossible to tell the truth—to maintain any intellectual integrity—and the above quotation exemplifies one of the commonest of them infesting what presently passes for literary journalism. But it is precisely in that style that most of his admirers think of Barrie—that sort of sugary sentimentality is indispensable to thorough participation in the great Barrie legend. It cannot be overemphasised that a reputation dependent upon such assumptions as underlie the phrase "brother snowflakes" is likely to disappear like them—and the sooner the better. It is destitute of reality. And criticism must be founded on reality. "Like his brother snowflake, Peter," continues the fanciful Mr Parker, "he (Barrie) will never grow up." I agree: that is why his work is already dating. I do not envy anyone who at some moment in his life fails to wax enthusiastic over Peter and Wendy, Sentimental Tommy, and so forth; but I envy still less anyone for whom these do not more or less speedily become intolerable. After the "first fine, careless rapture," Barrie is acceptable only in increasingly homeopathic doses: no matter what happens to Peter, other people—if they are not born idiots—grow up; and it is therefore certain that Barrie's immortality will be of an exceedingly partial and intermittent kind. The quintessence of Barrie shares the unseizable attributes of quicksilver: but for that single scintillating fly-away element the work upon which his great reputation rests would be altogether negligible. No fame of equal dimensions—and

profitability—ever depended on so exiguous a factor. This element is *sui generis*—it defies analysis—it exists in almost infinitesimal quantities—it is certainly priceless. Barrie takes his place with the inventors of the fairy-tales—but he is less than most of these unknowns; his achievements are derived, in part at least, from theirs, and he would be a daring individual who would affirm that Peter Pan will live as long and affect as many people as profoundly as Jack of the Beanstalk has done, or that Marie Rose can take her place alongside Cinderella. Barrie has deftly caught some of the qualities of mythic composition; but his work lacks the profound unsearchable power of the true myth. His triumphs are hollow; he misses the core of the matter. And as a master of absurdity, a manipulator of the irrational, he falls far short of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll at their best. He seldom gets beyond mere sentiment. He nowhere reaches that purely poetic and phantasmagoric plane upon which his kind of work could conceivably be carried to the Nth degree. And great art of whatever kind is great only in so far as it approaches that unachieved Nth which, like an unseen star, can nevertheless be accurately enough located. His work is destitute of spiritual purpose; it is *réchauffé* Maeterlinck gaudily tricked out and spiced with insincerity.

"When he first set his easel up on the banks of the Quharity," says Dixon Scott, "his intention was to paint the simple truth; if the reader will glance back at his earliest canvases, the opening studies in 'Auld Licht Idylls,' he will see that their manner is the circumstantial one of Galt, with perhaps a touch of Thoreau of 'The Winter's Walk,' and just a trace of the truthful Stevenson of 'Pastoral.' They are not 'idylls' at all; the word was used ironically: the artist's idea was to show us, with a dogged Dutch fidelity, the dour reality of our sentimentalised Arcadia. He would bring out the slowness of these weavers—their ludicrous love-making; he would paint 'the dull vacant faces' of the Tammas Haggarts and Pete Lunans as pitilessly as any Degas drawing washerwomen. And then, suddenly, came a change. Tammas began to grow eldritch. Pete became a quaint gnome. Gnarled idiosyncrasies sprouted, the stolid features swelled or shrunk; Thrums grew into a goblin market, all quirks and wynds and cobbles, its weavers were a race of hob-nailed elves." All this is true enough. I have no objec-



tion to any artist doing what he likes with the world ("intermingledons" as Burns called them of the realistic and the incredible are nothing new in Scottish literature), but—there are ways and ways of dealing with it, and the consensus of competent critical opinion throughout the ages does not look for results of any particular artistic moment from the particular process Barrie was constrained to adopt: and in these post-Freudian days the matter is susceptible of ready explanations which do not redound to the credit of Barrie's mentality. Nor are Dixon Scott's subsequent reflections on Scottish psychology any longer tenable by anyone competent to discuss the matter. "Barrie feared sentiment," he says, "because, as a Scotchman, he loved the seductive thing too well. Ours is a queer country. Caresses being rare in it, we gloat furtively over the idea of them. Prettiness and daintiness seldom appearing among our lean naked hills, we write passionate poems about tiny daisies and gemmy-eyed fieldmice. Endearments and graces which you think nothing of in the South, making free with them, with wondrous hardihood, every day, are always invested for us with a dark dreadful deliciousness; the suppressed love of tenderness, felt by every human heart, is made feverish by the fascination of the forbidden." To go no further, Dixon Scott knew little of poems about mice and daisies if he thought them a Scottish speciality—they are nothing of the kind: Verlaine wrote wonderfully of mice—and his whole hypothesis (his erotic misconception of his country gives his measure as a critic) is built on equally false premises. The chief of these is that Barrie is a great writer—that he is of any particular literary or intellectual consequence. His popularity, which is an entirely different matter, is not in dispute, and the causes and consequences of that would take us far afield into questions of human destiny, educational purpose and method, and the way in which public opinion is formed and directed. But it has been well said that the opinions of a million incompetent persons are no better than the opinion of one incompetent person—Barrie's immense popularity is no evidence of his literary quality. So far as Scottish literature is concerned, Barrie has long severed any effective connection he ever had with Scottish life or thought: the great bulk of his work has been conditioned by the requirements of a vehicle—the commercial theatre—

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entirely non-Scottish in its evolution and present condition, so that, despite the fact that he is a Scot, he is the very antithesis of anything that can legitimately be called a Scottish dramatist: and so far as Scottish psychology is concerned he has only used those stock-conceptions of it—adroitly enough remanipulated to achieve effects of novelty—the general acceptance of which has so largely prevented the profitable (in other than a financial sense)—*i.e.*, the realistic—exploration of our racial genius in every branch of art.

G. J. Nathan has described Barrie's work as "The triumph of sugar over diabetes," and Ludwig Lewisohn has said of him: "His plays are commended for their purity. He surrounds with the gentlest pathos and all the beauty he can comprehend a triviality of soul that is as shameful as one hopes it is rare. Spiritual triviality—we come very close to Barrie with that phrase. He makes harsh things sweetish and grave things frivolous and noble things to seem of small account. No wonder he is popular among all the shedders of easy comfortable tears. He dramatises the cloud in order to display its silver lining. . . . Barrie's imagination is as uncontrolled as his ideas are feeble and conventional. Yet this is the dramatist whose position is seriously undebated. This purveyor of sentimental comedy to the unthinking crowd deceives the semi-judicious by moments of literary charm and deftness and mellow grace that recall the years when he wrote *Sentimental Tommy* and *Margaret Ogilvie*. But these years are gone. His noisy stage successes have left him increasingly bare of scruple, of seriousness, of artistic and intellectual coherence. They have left him 'whimsical' and false and defeated in the midst of wealth and fame."

I agree, and have only one word to add to that. It is this—Courage!

[See article on Barrie by Dixon Scott, *The Bookman*, Special Xmas Number, 1913; George Jean Nathan's "The Critic and The Drama," New York, 1922; Ludwig Lewisohn's "The Drama and The Stage," New York, 1922. See also Patrick Braybrooke's "J. M. Barrie" (Drane's) 1925, and Barrett H. Clark's "A Study of the Modern Drama" (Appleton) 1925, a comprehensive survey of its subject from the time of Ibsen to the present day.

## CHAPTER FOUR.

NEIL MUNRO.

There are quite a large number of solemn 'well-read' Scots even to-day—albeit fewer than there were ten years ago, and like to be progressively fewer as the years pass and post-war mentality asserts its complete difference from pre-war or war-time mentality—who swear by Neil Munro and regard him as a great writer. There is no need to be hard upon them for this misconception : rather let us seek to understand it—for it is perfectly, if a little subtly, understandable, and understanding of it is a key to many other things in contemporary Scottish literature. For the truth of the matter may be just as dogmatically—if regretfully !—stated as the untruth is : Neil Munro is not a great writer, he is not even a *good* writer—at best he is no more than a (somewhat painfully) respectable craftsman. The opposition of a mere denial to a mere assertion does not carry us far, however—although it is necessary, perhaps, (since a certain type of mind regards a dogmatic statement provided it be complimentary—and, more especially, if it accord with popular opinion—as almost a self-evident truth, whereas an adverse judgment is suspect in proportion to the force with which it is stated) to emphasise that any opinion is as good as any other so long as it remains a mere opinion. But the test of the matter is comparison. Let those who so esteem Neil Munro simply be asked to "place" him—either in relation to British, or to European, literature. I venture to assert that few of his admirers will be found able to do so with any convincingness—which simply demonstrates that their

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admiration for him has causes rather than reasons, and that their predilection for him, however creditable it may be on other grounds, is destitute of literary judgment. The more intellectually honest and competent of them will speedily discover, confronted with such a demand, that Neil Munro has literally no place in British, let alone European, literature : he simply does not count : his existence—his popularity—is simply a commercial phenomenon, an element (of a comparatively very restricted nature) in contemporary entertainment, of no particular literary consequence at all. It is only when one narrows the field to—not British nor European but—contemporary Scottish literature that he acquires any appreciable stature as an artist.

It is inconceivable that any responsible literary critic to-day should endorse, as having been even plausibly true then, what Andrew Lang said of "The Lost Pibroch"—that "in 'The Lost Pibroch' we meet genius as obvious and undeniable as that of Mr Kipling. . . . Mr Munro's powers are directed to old Highland life, and he does what genius alone can do—he makes it alive again, and makes our imagination share its life—his knowledge being copious, original, at first hand." Andrew Lang to-day has no tittle of reputation as a literary critic—less even than he has as a poet, despite his four-volume Collected Poems which all due efforts of piety allied to publicity failed to make less than a complete failure. Typical enough of the sort of thing that is said by reviewers in every generation of all sorts of writers, the futility of his remarks quoted above should have been when they were made—and should be now—only too apparent on the slightest examination. What do they amount to ? Nothing but words. Take the remark about genius. What is life ? Is this an adequate definition of one of the powers of genius ? Could it not be equally well—or ill—applied to all sorts of writers without telling us anything about their specific powers and distinctive qualities ? Knowledge at first-hand is immaterial : as Arnold Bennett and others have shown some of the most brilliantly realistic writing in the world has been done by writers who had never seen what they were writing about. So I could go on. These two or three sentences of Lang's contain all manner of critical *non sequiturs* and, in the last analysis, mean nothing but amiability ! It is upon comments of this kind

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that Neil Munro's (all things considered) not inconsiderable reputation has been built : but it is destitute of critical foundation. His work has never really been subjected to criticism. I know of no competent essay—or, such is the state of British journalism, review—devoted to him. If a tithe of what Lang said were true he would be one of our most critic-neglected contemporaries.

George Blake, writing on him in "The Book Monthly" (June 1919), in a curious blend of useful fact and futile hyperbole, said, *inter alia*, "Sensitive to the most minute degree, this artist shrinks from the merest suggestion of professed artistry. He has no mannerisms and no arrogances ; he conceals the author beneath the mask of the journalist—he is a bundle of inhibitions successfully decked out as a man of business. . . . His first published story appeared in the *Speaker* in 1893. The collected tales were published in 1896—'The Lost Pibroch, and other Sheiling Stories,' and, lo ! Britain had a new author. His style was exotically beautiful. (Mr Munro acknowledges a debt for rhythmic sense to Alexander Smith's 'Dreamthorp.') His romance was pure Celtic, fundamentally different from that of Scott and Stevenson. His plots had all the swiftness and fatality and economy of short story perfection. So the wise critics marked his name ; Henley and Lang proclaimed it abroad. It remained for Neil Munro to carry on the good work. This he has done beautifully, if sparingly." So far we can go with Mr Blake, with an indulgent smile for what could pass as exotic thirty years ago, the reservation that *wise* in its application to Henley and Lang as critics has an illuminating meaning of its own and is certainly not synonymous either with judicious or prudent, the feeling that the art of the short story is a subject that is more than a little beyond Mr Blake and that at least "the half has not been told" here in relation thereto, and finally the caveat that what he says about "a bundle of inhibitions" says a great deal more than he imagined, and reveals the truth of the matter in a fashion inconceivable to him.

"Short-Story perfection"?—That forces some impossible comparisons—with Maupassant, Poe, Chekhov, Bunin, Katherine Mansfield, and several scores of others : but Munro cannot be thought of in comparison with any of these : he must—to do justice to him—be compared (to his great advantage) with Ian MacLaren, Barrie, Galt

(and still I think to his advantage but slightly) with Stevenson, Fiona MacLeod, and even Cunninghame-Graham, though he is an inferior stylist to either of the two last-named, and lacks entirely MacLeod's amazing powers of word-painting and of spiritual insight, even if he is more faithful to the scenic facts and psychology of his chosen region and types. But I part company with Blake most decidedly when he goes on to say: "He has done classic work; it is enough. If you would test that judgment, read first a short story called 'War' in 'The Lost Pibroch' anthology, then 'Young Pennymore' in 'Jaunty Jock and other Stories.' Finally, read 'Gillian the Dreamer' and learn how a major artist reveals the artistic soul." (A phrase that has a perilous affinity to sob-stuff !)

Now the fact of the matter is simply that Neil Munro is a minor artist and even so lacks the personality to make the most of the limited, yet indubitable gifts, he possesses. He has consistently served two Gods—and has not succeeded in avoiding the consequences of divided allegiance. His persistence in remaining a journalist instead of devoting himself entirely to letters is illuminating. It argues, perhaps, self-criticism of an uncommon penetration. He was not a great journalist in any sense of the term; it is difficult to imagine why any man of even such parts as he had should continue to devote himself to work that in the last analysis can only be regarded as useless—unless it were sheer economic necessity, or an incurable hesitancy to "burn his boats behind him." Inhibitions! That is the fault of all his writing—the inability to let himself go; a defect of temperament, and, perhaps, an infirmity of will, at war with his best instincts, and, on the whole, winning! His reticence, a certain high, if narrow, integrity, an aversion to log rolling, to being classed with any school, and so forth—qualities not without their value in contemporary letters, and which must certainly be acknowledged here—are, after all, comparatively unessential matters, when a "house is divided against itself and cannot stand." Neil Munro is the lost leader of Scottish Nationalism. He has chosen to be without following and without influence. That he has carried off his spiritual unsuccess with a certain air, a melancholy reserve, goes without saying in a Celt, touched as he has been, however ineffectually, to the higher things. He is a promise that has not been kept and while it is not per-



missible here perhaps to enquire too closely into just how and why it came to be broken, I may speak perhaps of such a thing as a disabling fear of life, a soul-destroying tyranny of respectability, and add that I never think of the essential problem of Neil Munro—who went so far and yet could not encompass that “little more and how much it is”—without remembering what Frank Harris says : “Or take John Davidson, a poor little Scotch lad who brought it (genius) to a schoolmastership and came to London. He, too, wrote magnificent poetry and great prose, yet at the height of his achievement at fifty years of age, standing surely among the greatest Englishmen of his time, he blew his brains out because he could not endure the poverty and daily humiliations of his life. For all the great ones there is the crown of thorns, the dreadful valley of humiliation, and the despairing loneliness of Gethsemane, even if they do not fall beneath the Cross and suffer the agonies of Calvary. . . . The great poet, the supreme artist, must have all the handicaps, in my opinion; must know the extremes of poverty and misery and humiliation, or he will never reach the cloud-capped heights.” So I think unworthy hesitations—whatever their nature, economic, moral, psychological—have made Neil Munro “unequal to himself.” All men have spoken well of him. He has preferred the little wars of Lorn to the conflict of real life in which he ought to have engaged. His literature is a literature of escape—and, in so far as it has succeeded in escaping, in being a sort of antithesis of self-expression, a substitute for it, it is without life—for life cannot escape from its destiny ! And it “succeeds” in that way to an extraordinary degree. I do not think any of his prose work will live. It nowhere verges upon major art. As to style, certainly Munro conserved a creditable attitude towards the written word, even towards the concept of form, in a singularly undistinguished period, “without form and void,” in Scottish letters. So much may readily be accounted to him for grace. But it was a negative achievement at best, although even so not without a tiny but appreciable value. It was a style, rather than Style, that he conserved—a style that now seems at once limited, constrained and “precious.” It was a literary style—rather than a style of life; and upon the latter and not upon the former depends the creation of literature.

Yet Neil Munro's novels and short stories, although even now they have begun to “date” badly, are documents



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in our literary history. He will be remembered as having been in some ways the greatest of his contemporaries amongst our countrymen: and his books will retain a Scottish—even when they have lost all literary—interest. Nothing that I have said impugns their eminent readability: there are certain qualities of the Scottish spirit—certain elements of the Scottish tradition—nowhere else reproduced or nowhere else so well; for the true Scotsman, savouring his heritage, he is indispensable, and for the Scottish literary student at all events he will remain so. I have read and re-read almost all that he has written, and brooded long hours over it. I could write pages of keen appreciation about each of his books. What I have said here would be unconscionably mean and ingrate were my scale forgotten. Let me repeat I am here regarding him from the standpoint of world literature—from the standpoint of a Scot who is not content that in any department of art his countrymen should fail to produce work—specifically Scottish yet universal—comparable to the best of its kind produced anywhere else. Neil Munro remains, on the whole, one of the six best short story writers Scotland has yet produced, the others being R. L. Stevenson, "Fiona Macleod," John Buchan, R. B. Cunningham Graham, and (to count them as one) the Misses Findlater.

Neil Munro has also written a certain amount of verse. Most of it is no more. It has not yet been collected into volume form. One little poem—a gem of its kind—is sure of life. This is "John o'Lorn," already appearing in many anthologies. It is like Violet Jacob's "Tam i' the Kirk" and Charles Murray's "The Whistle" a little classic of our literature. It will serve better than anything else he has written, I think, to perpetuate its author's memory. His other poems are rhetorical, windy, empty for the most part and bear a curious vague impression of having been *translated*. Perhaps here we stumble upon a real clue. Had Neil Munro never learned English—and lived quietly in an entirely Gaelic-speaking community—he might have come to his true stature as an artist. Is the cardinal flaw that vitiates all his work, so easy to detect and so difficult to explain, really the product of a species of mental miscegenation?

[See *A Wizard of the North*, by George Blake, *Book Monthly*, June 1919. Full list of Neil Munro's books from Messrs Wm. Blackwood & Sons.]

## CHAPTER FIVE.

CHARLES MURRAY.

There are a large number of people in Scotland, and Scots abroad,—chiefly Aberdonians—who regard Charles Murray as a great poet as, indeed, the greatest contemporary Scottish poet and one of the very few of his successors who have inherited aught of the “magic of Burns.” I am not one of them. On the contrary, I say that Charles Murray has not only never written a line of poetry in his life, but that he is constitutionally incapable of doing so—his style of mind, his attitude to life, make him so, just as it is the nature of Aberdeen granite to be non-diamondiferous. To put it in other words “you can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s lug.” The majority of his compatriots—even Aberdonians—may have little or no use for silk-purses and, on the contrary, a robust interest in porcine ears—but it would be a more than usually courageous Philistine who would contest that what cannot be denied the name of poetry without being at variance with all competent opinion both to-day and in the past (I thus throw a sufficiently wide net to allow for the furthest variations of literary taste) inclines so much to the former and so little to the latter as to thrust the latter out of the sphere of the poetical altogether, or, at any rate, to allow no more than that, at its highest and best, it may be cognisable as having a place on the very lowest plane of poetry. On the other hand, to make even such a modest claim for its recognition as poetry at all, seems to me most misguided—for, after all, sow’s lugs have functions of their own which those who are addicted to them should frankly recog-

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nise and honestly proclaim, instead of trying to justify their predilections on false or flimsy scores.

Strict literary criticism, at any rate, cannot equivocate on a matter of this kind. Whatever Charles Murray's work may be it is not poetry and incapable of consideration as such. But from a less narrowly literary point of view—remembering that books have to sell, and also remembering that, if the choice has to be made (and any Scottish anthologist compiling a selection—or, more often, collection—for commercial purposes is faced with precisely this choice) half-a-loaf is better than no bread—it must be conceded that what is popularly regarded and to some extent “appreciated” as Poetry is a very much wider and less finical thing than what really is Poetry, and, as such, almost wholly *caviare* to the general. In the popular poetry of Scotland to-day Charles Murray holds a considerable place. To discuss how that was acquired for him (for it is by no means entirely due to the kind of his work and still less to its transcendent quality in that kind) would involve us in intricate considerations as to the cultural state of Scotland to-day, the ways in which public taste is manufactured, the art of publishing and the science of publicity, and so forth, into which I do not propose to enter. But, *qua* poet, who will contend that Charles Murray at his best can be mentioned in the same breath as (to keep to Scots) John Davidson or Robert Buchanan or, even, “Fiona M'Leod” at their worst, or (if to get a better parallel it is desirable to mention someone who could “handle the Doric”) at his not-disreputable average—his worst being very, very bad just as his scanty best was extremely good—“J. B. Selkirk”? And yet he has had a commercial success and a popular esteem far beyond that accorded to any of these. “Hamewith,” his best-known book, is in its fifteenth edition. The book was issued by Messrs Constable in the Autumn of 1909 (a number of the poems in it having been previously published in a volume issued by Messrs Wylie, Aberdeen, in 1900) and by December 1912 had sold no fewer than 5000 copies at 5s—somewhat of a record sale among new poetry at that time, despite the fact that it was in dialect. And, of course, Mr Murray is an LL.D. of Aberdeen University. Imagine John Davidson as an LL.D.! I have mentioned “J. B. Selkirk.” He is one of the very few of our modern poets who, via the Doric, rises above verse-making at its

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best and achieves poetry—not at its worst! When anyone talks of Mr Murray's *mastery* of Braid Scots—although I appreciate his *uses* of it in certain directions—I think of “J. B. Selkirk's ”

“ Miles and miles round Selkirk toun,  
Where forest flow'rs are fairest  
Ilka lassie's stricken down  
Wi' the fate that fa's the sairest.  
A' the lads they used to meet  
By Ettrick braes or Yarrow  
Lyin' thrammelt head and feet  
In Brankstone's deadly barrow!  
O Flodden Field!

That rises infinitely beyond Mr Murray's compass. Compare it with any passage in “Hamewith” or “Country Places”; the difference between it and anything to be found there is a measure of the difference between Scottish poetry and Scottish verse—between the power of the Doric and the merely prosaic, if vigorous and diverting, uses, to which Mr Murray puts an inferior form of it. For his particular dialect is perhaps the poorest of them all and certainly the least capable of being used to genuine poetic purpose.

Andrew Lang was very guarded in his introduction to “Hamewith”—and yet not guarded enough, as those who read that preface and compare it with his “Unposted Letter” to Burns will appreciate. In such slight commendation of Murray as he contrives to imply—rather than gives—he is at variance with his other far more authentic-sounding utterance; he is feigning a love for the haggis—or, at least, some of the constituents or accompaniments, of the haggis—which he certainly would have been unable to substantiate if put to the test. Confessing himself a Scot “whose critics in England banter him on his patriotism, while his critics in Scotland revile him as rather more unpatriotic than the infamous Sir John Menteith, who ‘whummled the bannock’ ” he proceeds to say that “the Scots of Mr Murray is so pure and so rich that it may puzzle some patriots whose sentiments are stronger than their linguistic acquirements.” That can easily be believed—similar gentry abound to-day and are seriously impeding the movement for the Revival of the Doric by their ill-founded enthusiasm—but “pure” and “rich”?; his Scot-

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tish critics certainly knew him best. Aberdeenshire Scots is certainly the reverse of "pure": anything further from the conceivable norm—anything more corrupt—it would be difficult to find in any dialect of any tongue. And as to "rich"—yes, as the "haggis" is, in the sense in which Lang refers to the "haggis" in that criticism of Burns: but the very reverse of rich in beauty-creating powers, in intellectual resource, in technical accomplishment. "The imitations of Horace," continues the preface, "are among the best extant, and Mr Murray might take Professor Blackie's advice, trying how far the most rustic idylls of Theocritus, say the 'Oaristus,' can be converted into the Doric of the Lowlands." What the phrase the "Doric of the Lowlands" means in this connection I cannot imagine—certainly Mr Murray has no command of the Lallan tongue—but Professor Blackie's advice as to Theocritus has been taken by my friend, the Rev. Wallace Gardiner, of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, and his translations—similar in kind, in tone,—are to my mind superior to Murray's of Horace as verse. With them as anything else—as mere translations—a literary critic is not concerned. But the significant thing about the preface is Lang's silence as to Mr Murray's literary merits as such. All he says is: "Poetry more truly Scots than that of Mr Murray is no longer written—was not written even by Mr Stevenson, about 'a' the bonny U.P. Kirks,' for, in his verses there was a faint twinkle of the spirit of mockery." And is the spirit of mockery—the ability to take ourselves with a grain of salt or put our tongues in our cheeks so very Un-Scottish? Mr Murray could certainly have done with a *souçon* of it here and there. It would have lightened—and perhaps eliminated—many a stodgy stanza of tenth-rate moralising and laborious "wut."

"Poetry more truly Scots is no longer written" might mean anything. But we know what it means. In his introductory note to his anthology of "Scottish Minor Poets," Sir George Douglas well says—adroitly, but very excusably, understating the case so as to do no unnecessary violence to his own selection—that "this popular character of Scottish poetry is by no means without its correlative disadvantage. The range of subject treated is limited to the comparatively few and simple feelings, the comparatively few and ordinary incidents, of an humble and uneventful life. . . . Thus, in reading a collection of Scottish

poems identical situations, identical trains of feeling will be found to recur with an iteration which only poetic beauty of an uncommon order can save from becoming wearisome." Charles Murray has certainly made no effort to take Scottish verse out of the narrow and dismal rut in which he found it—he has done nothing to repurify a dialect which he found in a corrupt state and to put it to nobler and higher uses—and, in lieu of any distinctive and significant intellection, he is almost always content to versify platitudes and commonplaces and be a sort of miniature Scottish Martin Tupper to whom pawkiness is, if anything, an added disfigurement.

And yet—occasionally, and, above all, if not quite only—in "The Whistle" where he deals objectively with pure reminiscence and contrives to forego either "drawing the moral" or "improving the occasion"—he certainly has written verses which would demand inclusion in any re-issue of "Scottish Minor Poets" and which I do not even grudge inclusion in Mr Buchan's "Northern Muse" (albeit only purely literary criteria were supposed to be applied there—unless a way out be taken, as it certainly can be found, by the contention that "purely literary" is not quite the same thing as "purely poetical.") In "The Whistle," Murray certainly reaches the top of his form—it is immeasurably better than anything else he has written—so far better, indeed, that from the average of his work it could reasonably have been predicted that he could never write anything even half so good. It will live in Scottish literature. But one swallow does not make a summer, and, though there have been instances where one poem has revealed poetic genius of a high order which for one reason or other gave no other evidences of itself, this is not one of them. On the contrary!

[*Hamewith* (with an introduction by Andrew Lang) : *The Sough o' War and Country Places*—all published by Messrs Constable and Coy. Ltd. (London).]

## CHAPTER SIX.

### VIOLET JACOB.

I remember Mrs Jacob saying to me, *apropos* something I was to be writing about her, to be sure and make it perfectly clear that she was *Mrs* Jacob (since Violet Jacob, *tout court*, would have denationalised her). She is so proud of being a Scotswoman. Markedly racial in character she is yet seldom, if ever, nationalistic in tone. Avoiding narrow chauvinism on the one hand and colourless internationalism on the other, she is an admirable example of that type, essentially and most distinctively Scottish, whom circumstances have led to accept without question the cultural consequences of the established political relationship between Scotland and England: by some psychological sleight her Scottish patriotism is constrained to express itself solely in non-controversial directions and to turn a blind eye to all else: and her attitude as a Scots-woman resembles that to which J. S. Machar as a Czech confesses in his "Tractate of Patriotism":—

"I am a Czech, even as I might be  
A German, Turk, Gypsy, or negro, if  
I had been born elsewhere. My Czechdom is  
The portion of my life, which I do feel  
Not as delight and bliss, but as a solemn  
And inborn fealty. My native land  
Is within me alone . . ."

From the fact that Scotland is thus personal to her—a quality of her being—she cannot descend to argument, even with herself. Her work is therefore conservative



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rather than creative. Her readers must come to her: she does not go out of her way to meet them. She appeals only to "the converted," as it were: she makes no appeal to the lapsed masses for whom Scotland has ceased to mean what it means to her—regardless of the fact that unless they can somehow be reclaimed the Scotland which means so much to her may soon disappear altogether. This is too apt to give her work the effect of pose—of merely striking an attitude—which, were it real, would be alert to the dangers threatening the existence of such a spirit to-day. Lacking that recognition, and the resource that would accompany it, the work too easily acquires the appearance of mere sentimentality. But Mrs Jacob's work is far from being merely sentimental, and although very often superficially she may seem through her choice of subject and angle of treatment to be merely a belated and somewhat etherealised Kailyairder her "direction" is subtly but none the less completely different. The difference between her sentiment even at its worst and her humour even in its most hackneyed vein, and theirs, is never less than the difference between butter and margarine.

"What is love of one's land? . . .

I don't know very well.

It is something that sleeps

For a year—for a day—

For a month—something that keeps

Very hidden and quiet and still

And then takes

The quiet heart like a wave

The quiet brain like a spell

The quiet will

Like a tornado: and that shakes

The whole of the soul."

So sings Ford Madox Hueffer: and it is true of Mrs Jacob's experience, I am sure: but all her work is such emotion remembered in a most deceptive tranquillity: if she reveals herself at the moment of the paroxysm it must be that in her case the vibrations are so swift in their succession as to induce an illusion of immobility. She never tears a passion to rags—she simply transforms it into an insubstantialised waif of itself. There is certainly more art in the latter feat: but, practically, it comes to

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much the same thing in the long run. "Life is in the movement by which it is transmitted." The art that conceals art can conceal it too completely. Mrs Jacob is one of the Kennedy-Erskines of Dun—a history of whom she is presently writing. (Her niece, Miss Marjory Kennedy-Erskine, has recently been writing verse of some merit.) It may seem a little strange that a lady in her position (living largely outwith Scotland, too) should have so good a grip of the vernacular and should find in it her medium of most intimate utterance—but there is nothing strange about it really. There are those to-day who are deploring that Braid Scots is falling into the hands of the "highbrows"—but the fact of the matter is, of course, that Braid Scots, like any other language, has never been employed and never can be employed to good effect for literary purposes, except in very rare cases, save by those who comparatively to the great mass of the people are, indeed, "highbrows." Those who are deploring the intellectualisation of the vernacular are those who know nothing of our literary history. The desuetude of the Doric is largely due to the fact that it has been almost entirely relegated to those who simply haven't the brains to use it—local bards who have dragged it down to the level of their own intelligences and made it a fit vehicle for doggerel that no more resembles poetry than a broken-down cart-horse resembles a blood mare. Mrs Jacob's work is like the latter—only the difference is not always perfectly clear in the confused air of minor Scottish letters because it is often the same colour as the former, and few people have an eye for difference in form.

The truth of the matter is, of course, that by far the largest proportion of work of the slightest literary merit in the Doric has been done not by "the common people," with whom, according to that idea, its safety lies from the taint of "highbrowism," but by aristocrats; it is an aspect of *noblesse oblige*. Mrs Jacob belongs by birth and breeding to the company which includes Lady Grisell Baillie, Lady Nairne, Lady Ann Lindsay, Lady Wardlaw, Jean Elliot, and, to come to our own time, Lady John Scott. Who from any lower walk of life has given us work comparable to theirs in the whole history of Scottish vernacular poetry? Only Isobel Pagan, perhaps, can be admitted of their company, Tibby, as Sir George Douglas has called her, "the withered, smoke-dried, half-witch-woman, half-

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smuggler, of the hovel on the Ayrshire waste." And if none of these have proved more than minor poets, that merely reveals the inadequacy of *noblesse oblige* as an agent of inspiration.

"Mrs Jacob has this rare distinction," wrote John Buchan in his introduction to her *Songs of Angus*. "She writes Scots because what she has to say could not be written otherwise and retain its peculiar quality. It is good Scots, quite free from mis-spelt English or that perverted slang which too often nowadays is vulgarising the old tongue. But above all it is a living speech, with the accent of the natural voice, and not a skilful mosaic of robust words, which, as in sundry poems of Stevenson, for all the wit and skill remains a mosaic. The dialect is Angus, and in every song there is the sound of the east wind and the rain. Its chief note is longing, like all the poetry of exiles, a chastened melancholy which finds comfort in the memory of old unhappy things as well as of the beatitudes of youth. The metres are cunningly chosen, and are most artful when they are simplest: and in every case they provide the exact musical counterpart to the thought. Mrs Jacob has an austere conscience. She eschews facile rhymes and worn epithets, and escapes the easy cadences of hymnology which are apt to be a snare to the writer of folk-songs."

"Accent of the natural voice" is a phrase that needs to be treated with care: were to be like ordinary speech the criterion practically all true and certainly all great poetry would be ruled out, of course, nor is normalcy in a wider sense any truer test—real poetry can be quite non-human; what should be said is that true poetic utterance always conveys the impression of being the natural, the inevitable, utterance of the poet in question. It is one of Mrs Jacob's distinctions that this is peculiarly true of her work at its best—exceedingly subdued though her utterance is. In what he says of her metres and the way in which they marry her thought, however, Mr Buchan reaches the heart of the matter. This is Mrs Jacob's distinctive contribution to vernacular verse—a new consciousness of technique. It is her form, and but seldom her content, that has significance. She may eschew facile rhymes and worn epithets and escape the cadences of hymnology: but she all too frequently accepts the stock-conception, the platitude, the "line of least resistance,"

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the obvious joke—and yet by mere technical variations she can give this old stuff “the little more and how much it is,” give that elusive *je ne sais quoi* which lifts it out of the ruck and makes it indubitably poetry, however minor. In content her work for the most part belongs to a vast mass which is so bad as to be beneath criticism altogether; yet her technique raises it, ever so unobtrusively, to a plane upon which it acquires a definite if almost indefinable value. This is no inconsiderable accomplishment. “An austere conscience” is another phrase liable to be sadly misconstrued. One reviewer, indeed, wrote: “That is manifest. There is always the note of restraint. It is generally very effective, but the reader may be pardoned if he wishes that sometimes Mrs Jacob would let herself go more freely. There might be some little loss of finish, but there would be a gain of abandon”—an utterance all too typical of contemporary Scottish “criticism.” It derives from a fallacy: for the writer in his mind was italicising the word “go,” whereas the real trouble with Mrs Jacob’s work can only be indicated by stressing the word “herself”—not “would let herself go,” but “would let *herself* go,” which is a very different thing. And her work is always best when it is at its most artful. She drops into banality all too easily as it is.

Small collection though it was, “Songs of Angus” made far from a homogenous book—and in her two subsequent volumes of verse the inferior element predominates still more: she drops with increasing frequency beneath her own best standard, and further. A great deal of nonsense has been written about her work—as about everybody else’s. “There is no weak number in the book,” says one writer of “Songs of Angus.” Indiscrimination of this kind is a left-handed compliment and reacts badly on many writers. Buchan rightly expressed a predilection for “*Tam o’ the Kirk*” (Mrs Jacob’s finest—but by no means most characteristic—poem) and “*The Gowk*,” which is almost as good poetry and far more characteristic of her work as a whole. But a certain reviewer in an important Daily thought that “‘*The Lang Road*’ is even more appealing.” This is so typical of Scottish artistic imperceptiveness—the refusal of, or constitutional incapacity for, aesthetic experience—that it is well worth while quoting a stanza from the effort in question:—

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"Below the braes o' heather, and far along the glen,  
The road rins southward, southward, that grips the souls  
o' men,  
That draws their fitsteps aye awa' frae hearth and frae  
fauld,  
That pairts ilk freen frae ither, and the young frae the  
auld."

And so on. If it were not almost incredible that the same hand that gave us Mrs Jacob's work at its best could descend to such flat-footed stuff as that, this essay would not have been written. But Mrs Jacob's work would have been very much more popular than it is if it had never risen above that level—but not quite with the same people. As it is Mr Buchan justly represented her in "*The Northern Muse*," with six pieces, as against three by Charles Murray, one by Neil Munro, three by himself, and three by James Logie Robertson ("Hugh Haliburton"). So judged—and rightly in my opinion—Mrs Jacob, slight though her output is and exceedingly attenuated the sheaf of her best, appears as by far the most considerable of contemporary vernacular poets. In this connection it must be remembered that these poets and a few others—always minor and for the most part very minor although their work is—have produced amongst them within the past quarter of a century or thereabouts a greater bulk of work of distinction in the Doric, assessed by purely literary standards, than (except for Burns) was produced during the preceding three to four centuries—i.e., since the time of the Old Makars. And Mrs Jacob is the latest comer of those mentioned, and has transcended the others simply because she is more of a conscious artist. These are facts of significance at the present juncture. Already a little stream of influence is proceeding from Mrs Jacob's vernacular verse. I trace an indebtedness in recent poems by "Tamar Faed," Winifred Duke, and Marion Angus amongst others—just as Charles Murray has his little following, as in the work of Mary Symon.

Securely of the choice company of ladies I have named who have, albeit each of them but in a single poem or two, given us so much of the finest of our Scots poetry, Mrs Jacob equally belongs to the small list of Scottish novelists of either sex whose work rises—however unob-

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trusively—into the category of literature. For want of a stronger creative urge, she is a good regional novelist *manqué*. In "The Interloper" and "Flemington," both set in her beloved Angus, she adumbrates herself as a potential Sheila Kaye-Smith of that part of Scotland. That potentiality has not been realised, and it is now unlikely to be: in her prose work as in her verse her output has been restricted to a minimum by a certain diletantism (not to be despised, however, since but for it in all likelihood we would have had far more of her inferior work and less of her highest quality). Yet she has shown powers that make the slightness of her work surprising. Both "The Interloper" and "Flemington," although written in English with but a shading of dialect here and there, are Scottish novels in contradistinction to English novels as few of Buchan's but most of Neil Munro's are. This is not merely a matter of setting but of spirit. The characters are not only nominally Scottish; they are fundamentally Scottish. Neither is a great novel in any sense of the term: but both stand in the category of respectable work in the novel form—and this is true of a relatively extremely small number of novels which are at the same time distinctively Scottish (leaving out of question the Waverley Novels). They have therefore a value for Scottish readers out of all proportion to their purely literary value. In other words, English novels of equally sound workmanship are very numerous—so numerous that work has to rise perceptibly above even that level to merit any particular critical attention—whereas such Scottish novels are comparatively few and therefore of more importance—to Scotland.

In an excellent study of "The Prose of Violet Jacob" in *The Northern Review* (June-July, 1924), Miss Winifred Duke—herself a novelist whose work has in some ways been influenced by Mrs Jacob's—said of Mrs Jacob's "English" novels: "*The Sheep-Stealers*, Mrs Jacob's first novel, is good with that excellence which just escapes being greatness. It is puzzling to say why this should be so, as the book, although long, is uniformly fine throughout and never becomes involved or wearisome. . . . The promise of *The Sheep-Stealers* becomes performance in *The Interloper*, and achievement in *The History of Aythan Waring*. This, Mrs Jacob's third novel, handicapped by a clumsy and unattractive title, is a notable



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piece of work which never obtained the full recognition it deserves." The element of truth in both these judgments has a two-fold reason behind it. In the first place, both these novels are historical novels—and the historical novel, when all is said and done, is a bastard form and seldom rises superior to the bar sinister. And in the second place, they fall between two stools. They are miscegnate work in the sense that the inverted commas I have used are necessary in calling them "English" novels. They are really Anglo-Scottish novels: and the subtle failure that infects them despite all the fine qualities brought to their writing is due to the fact of the writer's insufficient naturalisation in the tradition of the English novel. She has failed just as, as Edwin Muir has pointed out, every other Scottish writer writing in English has failed to achieve greatness in even the second or the third degree, for the simple reason that in attempting what she did attempt she was not going about her proper business. The proper business of any Scottish imaginative writer is to found or to further a Scottish—not an English—tradition. There are exceptions, of course, such as Conrad, to the rule I am indicating, but no Scot has so far proved one of them. I do not share Miss Duke's high opinion of Mrs Jacob's short stories. None of them rise above a very indifferent magazine work level. It only remains to add that such verses as she has written in English have no distinction. Mrs Jacob thus typifies the whole position of Scottish letters in a period which happily seems likely to be seen in retrospect as having closed with her work and been succeeded by a far richer one of which it afforded scant grounds for hope—in the slight body of her vernacular verse at its best, by which her name will be long and lovingly remembered, in the greater body of her vernacular verse which appertains to that "Kail-yaird" to which Scottish genius has for the most part so long and so lamentably been confined, and in the divided and, in the last analysis, ineffectual nature of her prose work—as in her apparent obliviousness to the vital problems confronting Scottish nationality to-day, which a better-oriented spirit with her raciality of character could not have refrained from addressing. In other words, the present position of Scotland as a nation has deprived us



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of all but a shadow of the Mrs Jacob whom in less over-Anglicised circumstances we might have had.

*Mrs Jacob's books include, in addition to those already mentioned: Novel, "Irresolute Catherine"; Short Stories, "The Fortune-Hunters and Other Stories," "Stories Told by the Miller"; and "Tales of My Own Country"; Poetry, "More Songs of Angus," "Bonnie Joan and Other Poems," and two poems in one of the Porpoise Press's Broadsheet Series.*

## CHAPTER SEVEN.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

"The eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth"—but R. B. Cunninghame Graham is not a fool but a victim of folly. The folly is in that condition of Scotland which almost always disperses its genius as Cunninghame Graham's has been dispersed. This involves waste—to the country first of all, and then, almost always, to the men it affects themselves, and through them to the world at large. Unable to acquire in Scotland itself that natural orientation which is available for the artist in practically every other civilised country (and I by no means use civilised as a synonym for European) he is driven out to attempt to organise himself effectively in other lands to whose cultural atmospheres he can seldom, if ever, adapt himself as can the native-born, handicapped as he is by instincts at variance with that special interplay of traditions, tastes, and tendencies which characterises each and any of them. He remains a foreigner there : he becomes exotic here. Scotland—despite its reputation for shrewdness and economy—deals centrifugally with its artists instead of centripetally. And in Cunninghame Graham it has lost, to a very large extent, one who was potentially the greatest Scotsman of his generation, and, at that, a type of Scotsman, thrown up from time to time but never numerous, an example of whom on the major scale would have been especially good for Scotland at a time desolated with a nimety of small and sordidly decadent varieties of the opposite type—which, be it confessed, is not, when timeously and ade-

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quately moderated by the presence of its antithesis, to be despised and has also from time to time given us Men as well as Mobs. The one type is to-day exemplified in, say, such forms as those of Norman Douglas, the Hon. R. Erskine of Marr, John Henry Mackay, Pittendrigh Macgillivray, S. J. Peplow, J. D. Fergusson, F. G. Scott, F. W. Bain, Isadora Duncan, and Cunninghame Graham himself, and the other in such feeble and petty travesties of itself as Joseph Laing Waugh, Annie S. Swan, Gilbert Rae, Dr Stewart Black, and the like. Buchan, Neil Munro, Violet Jacob, and Charles Murray blend elements of both with varying success. Their work is best when the former prevails, and popular in proportion as the latter predominates. It is to the detriment of Scotland that either type should be absent at any given time: it is in the nature of things that the latter should always immensely outnumber the former—but it is, on that ground, and others, all the more urgent that the over-development of the latter type should not put it in a position to reduce the former qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Yet that is precisely what has happened—mainly as one of the cultural consequences of the existing political relationship between Scotland and England, although prior causes operated to ensure that overdevelopment of the opposite type of Scot to Mr Cunninghame Graham which secured the acceptance of the *fait accompli* of the Union and the continuance since then of a like-minded majority, sufficiently overwhelming, despite obviously adverse results in most directions, to prevent any effective criticism of the existing condition of affairs evolving as the inevitable sequelæ of the Act of Union, let alone any redressing of the balance. So Scotland is influenced by her men of outstanding genius for the most part only at third hand. They can devote only a fraction of their genius to her—and then only obliquely and with vague and indeterminate results. Scottish life is deprived of its natural self-corrective. Driven out into alien cultures, deprived of the possibility of devoting themselves to a distinctive tradition equivalent to their distinctive natures as Scotsmen, their force is to some extent at least dissipated. They might, had there been a separate Scottish tradition, as there is, for example, a separate English and a separate French tradition, have risen in it to a first rank in comparative literature—but without that, forced to fit into a foreign tradi-

tion, they are handicapped by being unable to bring to it all the essential qualities and further handicapped by being unable to entirely rid themselves of qualities extraneous to that tradition, and the consequence is that they are restricted to second or third rank. It is a measure of Mr Cunninghamham Graham's power that, despite this double disability—and other disabilities which it in turn has forced upon him—he is the only Scotsman of his generation to win to the second rank as an imaginative artist—the second rank, be it remarked, in the British, not in the European or the World, scale—and it is a measure of the pass to which Scotland has been brought culturally that he should be practically unknown and destitute of influence in his native country. Any energetic parson can command a larger following in inverse ratio to his intellectual integrity. He contributes from time to time to certain English periodicals whose aggregate circulation and influence in Scotland is negligible. No Scottish periodical exists to which he can contribute: this is one of the most significant features of modern Scotland—the entire absence of any such rallying-post. A contribution from Cunninghamham Graham to any of the periodicals we have (and we have not one that is purely literary) would be like a blood-mare among donkeys, or an eagle in a hen-house.

A somewhat similar, if not identical, combination of qualities to that which constitutes Cunninghamham Graham and differentiates him so completely from the great masses of Scottish people to-day, has been the recurring agency in the production of almost all Scottish literature worthy of the name. That explains the dichotomy between Scottish literature in its most distinctive forms (exemplified in, say, Hermann Melville's "Moby Dick") and the reading public in Scotland to-day, which regards as exclusively Scottish all that is most completely destitute of those peculiar qualities which any careful study of our literary history will reveal as characteristically Scottish. In Cunninghamham Graham these are carried to an excess which, however, has by no means redeemed them from their historical disparateness and ineffectuality—so far as Scotland is concerned. Their incidence on Scottish consciousness as a whole remains erratic and very partial. The truth about Scottish imaginative genius is admirably put by Professor Gregory

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Smith in the following passage which might at the same time pass for an excellent description of the salient features, and faults, of Cunningham Graham. "One characteristic or mood (of Scottish literature) stands out clearly, though it is not easily described in a word," he says, "We stumble over 'actuality,' 'grip of fact,' 'sense of detail,' 'realism,' yet with the conviction that we are proceeding in the right direction. We desire to express not merely the talent of close observation, but the power of producing, by a cumulation of touches, a quick and perfect image to the reader. What we are really thinking of is 'intimacy' of style. Scottish literature has no monopoly of this, which is to be found in the best work anywhere and is indeed a first axiom of artistic method, no matter what processes of selection and recollection may follow: but in Scots the zest for handling a multitude of details rather than for seeking broad effects by suggestion is very persistent. . . . An exhaustive survey would show that the completed effect of the piling up of details is one of movement, suggesting the action of a concerted dance or the canter of a squadron. We have gone astray if we call this art merely meticulous, a pedant's or cataloguer's vanity in words. The whole is not always lost in the parts; it is not a compilation impressive only because it is greater than any of its contributing elements, but often single in result, and above all things lively. . . . The Scottish Muse has, however, another mood. Though she has loved reality, sometimes to maudlin affection for the commonplace, she has loved not less the airier pleasure to be found in the confusion of the senses, in the fun of things thrown topsyturvy, in the horns of elfland and the voices of the mountains. . . . The Scot is not a quarrelsome man, but he has a fine sense of the value of provocation, and in the clash of things and words has often found a spiritual tonic. Does any other man combine so strangely the severe and tender in his character, or forgo the victory of the most relentless logic at the sudden bidding of sentiment or superstition? Does literature anywhere of this small compass, show such a mixture of contraries as his in outlook, subject and method; real life and romance, everyday fact and the supernatural, things holy and things profane, gentle and simple, convention and 'cantrip,' thistles and thistledown." But while Professor Gregory

Smith concedes that "there is more in the Scottish antithesis of the real and fantastic than is to be explained by the familiar rules of rhetoric," he opines that "the Northerner may still, and to the end of time show 'an uncontented care to write better than he can' and may continue, with varying success, to obliterate the narrow differences between his and the Englishman's use of the common speech" but it must be left to Scotsmen themselves to determine whether they will continue to embalm in this preciousness or that, excellent as it may be in itself, the embryonic elements of entirely different and thus far wholly unrealised possibilities, or whether conditions cannot yet be so altered as to enable Scottish genius to achieve its own essential synthesis instead of decorating a borrowed one with idiosyncratic excrescences. For Professor Gregory Smith presupposes the continuance of the present relationship between Scotland and England, and he is unquestionably right in concluding that as long as that subsists Scottish genius must remain fragmentary and discrete—perhaps an intuitive realisation that he was thus doomed to be frustrate and unfulfilled made Cunninghame Graham the ardent Scottish nationalist that he was until he recognised that so far as his day was concerned no saltatory developments would be forthcoming? Alas, that at the present moment, he should not inspire and lead the Scottish Renaissance movement but be instead to those of us who would fain encompass it a living example of the unregarded pass of exoticism, spiritual exile, and *fronde* to which we may be reduced!

For a Scot so significantly and unmistakably aligned with those elements which throughout our history have always revealed themselves as the most peculiar and essential elements of our national genius—albeit, in their practical artistic purposes, at all events, so utterly at variance with the "ethos" of our nation as a whole, so diametrically opposed in "direction"—is thus transformed into an incredible figure, the antithesis of everything that is accepted as Scottish. "Cunninghame Graham," says Bernard Shaw, in acknowledging his indebtedness to *Mogreb-el-Aksa* for the basis of his play, *Captain Brassbound's Confession*, "is the hero of his own book, but I have not made him the hero of my play, because so incredible a personage must have destroyed its likelihood—such as it is. There are moments when I do not myself believe in

his existence. And yet he must be real; for I have seen him with these eyes: and I am one of the few men living who can decipher the curious alphabet in which he writes his private letters. The man is on public record too. The battle of Trafalgar Square, in which he personally and bodily assailed civilisation as represented by the concentrated military and constabular forces of the capital of the world, can scarcely be forgotten by the more discreet spectators, of whom I was one. . . . He is fascinating mystery to a sedentary person like myself. The horse, a dangerous animal whom, when I cannot avoid, I propitiate with apples and sugar, he bestrides and dominates fearlessly, yet with a true republican sense of the rights of the four-legged fellow-creature of whose martyrdom, and man's shame therein, he has told most powerfully in his *Calvary*, a tale with an edge that will cut the soft cruel hearts and strike fire from the hard kind ones. He handles the other lethal weapons as familiarly as the pen: medieval sword and modern mauser are to him as umbrellas and kodaks are to me. . . . He is, I understand, a Spanish hidalgo. He is, I know, a Scotch laird. How he contrives to be authentically the two things at the same time is no more intelligible to me than the fact that everything that has ever happened to him seems to have happened in Paraguay or Texas instead of in Spain or Scotland." It only remains to add to that, that, despite the Trafalgar Square battle referred to and a few other nigh-forgotten episodes, and despite the fact that he was the other day Chairman of the W. H. Hudson Memorial Committee and vigorously defended Epstein's *Rima*, which for once in England made art almost as exciting as a new soap (a curious enough feat, in itself, for a member of a nation which to all appearances consists entirely to-day of Somerville Hagues), he combines with his incredible picturesqueness an equally incredible capacity for failing to be in the news. He began well: but for those of us who are connected with either the Scottish Nationalist or the Socialist movements he has become like a curious and unseizable dream by which we are tantalisingly haunted but which we can by no means effectively recall.

And yet is it altogether *his* fault? He has suffered by the alienation of his work from a great deal of the influence it might have had, which, in turn, would have benefited his work. But perhaps it is an effect upon the



movements in question of the very things they are ostensibly contending against—complementary rather than truly antithetical—that has estranged him and us. He describes how his “prince of palfreys trots the air and makes the earth sing when he touches it—the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes. . . . It is a beast for Perseus : he is pure air and fire. . . . His neigh is like the bidding of a monarch and his countenance enforces homage. . . . Nay, the man hath no wit than cannot, from the rising of the lark to the lodging of the lamb, vary deserved praise on the palfrey : it is a theme as fluent as the sea.” In this connection then Mr D. H. Lawrence would compel his admiration : and more, for I believe that he would be at one with Lawrence when he writes, in his last book, *St Mawr*, that volume of just and magical praise of a horse, “mankind no longer its own master. Ridden by this pseudo-handsome ghoul of outward loyalty, inward treachery, in a game of betrayal, betrayal, betrayal. The law of the gods of our era, Judas supreme ! People performing outward acts of loyalty, piety, self-sacrifice. But inwardly bent on undermining, betraying. Directing all their subtle evil will against any positive living thing. Masquerading as the ideal, in order to poison the real. Creation destroys as it goes, throws down one tree for the rise of another. But ideal mankind would abolish death, multiply itself million upon million, rear up city upon city, save every parasite alive, until the accumulation of mere existence is swollen to a horror. . . . The accumulation of life and things means rottenness. Life must destroy life, in the unfolding of creation.” I am reminded, too, here, of Robert Buchanan’s magnificent thanksgiving for the need for the continuance of Death—which again is evidence of Cunninghamham Graham’s essential connection with the real, if invisible, continuity of our Scottish literary tradition. But in that passage from Lawrence (which might, written in a different style, have as easily been Cunninghamham Graham’s) there is a realisation which is perhaps the clue to the failure of the Socialist movement as it exists to-day to prevent the existing system so infecting it that it rids itself of such men as Cunninghamham Graham—and wins, instead, its . . . Jack Joneses. Or—to stick to Scotland—let those of my readers who know the intellectual tone of the Clyde Group make their own comparisons. Had Scotland

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been his prime concern, Cunninghame Graham's declarations would have largely had to paraphrase Miguel de Unamuno's of Spain: "the poisonous wells of what Menéndez Pelayo called clerical democracy are reopened, the inquisitorial sense of demagoguery, and now the terrible cancer of Spain is visible—envy, envy, hatred of intelligence."

Cunninghame Graham possesses to a higher degree than any other Scot of his generation those vital qualities of the Scottish genius which have during the past hundred years—so far as Scotland is concerned (and that is what I am primarily concerned about!) been suppressed by the over-development of their own counterparts, to the detriment (by way of fatty degeneration) of these too. One who knows Scotland well, knows how well-nigh hopelessly it is bogged in mediocrity and platitudes in the last stages of decomposition—knows it as well as does Edwin Muir who happily came in it to his intense realisation of the necessity to "support new truths against old dogmas, simply because they are new, and in being new are a mark of life, of health, and of unconscious wisdom"—may have the true measure of indignant regret that circumstances have compelled one of Scotland's greatest sons to apply his genius otherwise than to his native country—and therefore less effectively, since that which is most truly nationalistic is also most universal in its appeal. It is lamentable to find Scotland still so largely preoccupied with what is conventionally regarded as Scottish literature, the mindless vulgarities of parochial poetasters and the cold-haggis-and-gingerbeer atrocities of prose Kailyairdism and presenting an inaccessibility, of which the general Puritan conspiracy of silence, the bourgeois blindness that won't see, and the incorrigible *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* of commercial journalism, are only parts, to the genius of such a great contemporary as Cunninghame Graham—the essence of whose philosophy—calculated to open the windows of most of his countrymen's minds for the first time and let in pure air—is expressed more succinctly perhaps than anywhere in his own writings, all of which it bracingly informs, and in all of which it is magnificently if less quotably illustrated, in the following passage from George Santayana :—  
"What a despicable creature must a man be, and how sunk below the level of the

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most barbaric virtue, if he cannot bear to live and die for his children, for his art, or for his country! . . . Nothing can be meaner than the anxiety to live on, to live on any how and in any shape: a spirit with any honour is not willing to live except in its own way, and a spirit with any wisdom is not over-eager to live at all."

Yes! Cunninghame Graham has written for the most part about distant countries, lost causes and side-issues: but if you would know something of what the bearing of his spirit on the conditions of industrial civilisation in such countries as Britain and the United States is you must read, not only all that he has written—for the pregnant little asides scattered through his work—but, also, I think, Lawrence's *St Mawr* and the essays of Santayana. Would that circumstances had not so discentred his own output, that the central tie-beam had not been awanting! Or that he had continued as he began to kick against the pricks, inspired with something like what Ford Madox Ford calls his friend Conrad's "idea of the Career"—his "belief in the ship-shape"!

Cunninghame Graham's books include "Notes on the District of Mentieth" (1895), "Thirteen Stories" (1900), "Success" (1902), "Progress" (1905), "The People" (1906), "Hope" (1910), "A Hatchment" (1913), "Scottish Stories" (1914), and "Doughty Deeds" (a biography of his ancestor, Robert Graham of Gartmore) (1925). Also "Self-Government for Scotland" (pamphlet).

See "Bibliography of Cunninghame Graham" (Dulac, 1924).

See also excellent essay in W. M. Parker's "Modern Scottish Writers"—excellent factually but disfigured critically by, for example, an enthusiasm for the following phrase (*italicised to draw attention to its great beauty*), "Again night yielded up its mysteries to the dawn, advancing, conquering, and flushed with power"—a sentence which might as easily have been, and probably has been scores of times written by Annie S. Swan. If there was no more "to" Cunninghame Graham's prose than that, there would be little need to say anything about him. But there is.

## CHAPTER EIGHT.

JAMES PITTENDRIGH MACGILLIVRAY.

Raising the question as to who is the greatest contemporary Scottish poet, I have frequently found myself able to disconcert people who ought to have known better by asking, after they had named so-and-so, and so-and-so, "And what about Macgillivray?" They had not thought of him in that connection. It is amazing how few of those who consider that they are competent to express opinions on contemporary Scottish literature have the slightest knowledge of Macgillivray's poetry. "What?—the sculptor you mean?" they ask surprisedly. Few of them know that he writes. He has escaped even the anthologists. This is not surprising in most cases; the majority of our anthologists have brought Anglo-Scottish tastes to their task which ill fit them to recognise the quality of such work as Macgillivray's—even if they so much as know of it. (And, be it said in passing, that such anthologies as the *Edinburgh Book of Scottish Verse* and the *St Andrews Treasury of Scottish Verse* show that their makers had, apart from other defects, very far from an all-in purview of their field.) But the absence of even a single example of Macgillivray's work from *The Northern Muse* is amazing, for John Buchan was certainly not ignorant of it; it is, indeed, perhaps the most outstanding blemish upon that best by far of our vernacular anthologies—the more so in that it is precisely from Macgillivray's corpus that Buchan could and should have drawn for certain kinds of poetry the infrequent production of which in Scotland he repeat-

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edly comments upon. Macgillivray, in fact, is by far our best complement to Burns as a vernacular poet : he essays many of the kinds of poetry which were outwith Burns's range, and, to an infinitely greater degree than most, eschews mere imitation of Burnsian models and the Burnsian spirit. I would roundly submit that any cultivated Scot who fails to appreciate Macgillivray's work can only do so because of over-Anglicisation—because Macgillivray stands so wholly outwith the English standards upon which his tastes have been formed and which insidiously determine his reactions no matter how enthusiastically he may imagine that he can view Scottish and English literatures as separate traditions, his Anglicised education being effectively counterbalanced by his sharpened exile's love for his native country. It is, indeed, this delusion which has caused so many Scottish-born critics even to do Scottish literature, albeit unconsciously, the injustice of bringing to its consideration alien prepossessions : and while this has largely deprived of what should have been their natural public our old and certain subsequent Makars too exclusively Scottish to answer easily to such mixed tests, it has borne upon no contemporary so hardly as upon Macgillivray ; for the simple reason that none is so purely and uncompromisingly Scottish. So far from the appreciation of English literature, which is so assiduously drilled into our Scottish school children, facilitating an appreciative approach to his work, the reverse is the case ; and a glib application of contemporary English criteria of taste (and it is excessively difficult for contemporary Scots to acquire any other) only serves to deprive Macgillivray's work of that appeal which it might have to the profounder and less articulate elements of their nature which remain predominantly Scottish, despite the bright veneer of current Anglo-Scottishry, and transforms it for them into a somewhat primitive and quite indecipherable phenomenon of which they can make little or nothing. The general ignorance of the very existence of Macgillivray's work is not altogether the public's blame, since the author published it privately at prices which only a mere handful of readers in Scotland would not consider exorbitant for work of supreme quality. But he was right in doing so. It is questionable whether the result would have been appreciably different had he published it in the ordinary way at

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the usual prices: both his books would have been practically still-born. There is a very small public for poetry of quality even in English—let alone Braid Scots—unless along with quality, happen to be combined, as very infrequently occurs, extra-literary causes of a popular vogue: and Macgillivray's work is for the most part—despite certain resemblances which would only further baffle naive readers going to it with popular predilections—at the furthest remove from what is commonly understood—especially by Scots themselves—as “Scotch” poetry.” Despite certain superficial similarities he has nothing whatever in common with any of the amazing array of mediocrities represented in the endless series of volumes of Mr D. H. Edwards’ “Modern Scottish Poets”—all of whom were dreadful examples of the excesses of self-parody into which imitative Post-Burnsianism has been forced under conditions of progressive Anglicisation. Macgillivray's work, constitutionally incapable of being affected by Anglicising influences, remains free from any such distortion and degradation. The consequence is that it does not appear Scottish at all to those accustomed to wallow in the obviousnesses of Kailyairdism: while, on the other hand, it is so far removed from stock-conceptions of what is Scottish, as to be for the most part inappreciable by any non-Scot. For foreign, and especially English, readers it can only be seen in its true aspect once the independent literary traditions of Scotland are re-established in general estimation as a distinctive department of *welt-literatur*, and effectively purged of the denationalised elements which have been progressively obscuring and corrupting them for the past hundred years and more. In other words, Macgillivray cannot be properly approached except *via* a thorough knowledge and genuine appreciation of the Old Makars, from whom he stands in the direct line of descent—and, in some important respects, stands entirely alone.

Commenting on his remark in his preface to *Bog Myrtle and Peat Reek* that “the following *not unduly polished* verses have been written from time to time during the past twenty-five years,” I have elsewhere written:—“‘Not unduly polished!’ The strength of Dr Macgillivray's personality stands revealed in that and many another characteristic phrase. His verse has the traditional dourness and undemonstrativeness of the Scot. A



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deliberate plainness, that subtle choice of the prosaic which in sum-effect can be so startling and distinctive, a Spartan aesthetic, lift these verses into a category of their own as undoubtedly the most authentic expressions of certain well-known but seldom-articulated aspects of the Scottish genius since the days of the Old Makars. Beauty lies deep in the heart of his work; but superficial graces and allurements are rigorously eschewed. He does not meet the Sasunnach half-way. The cleavage is complete between these poems and any Scottish verse that can be regarded as a contribution to 'English literature.' Not only in subject and in the tone and texture of the language and metres employed, but in psychological content, and (to use the term in its old Scots sense) *animosity*, Dr Macgillivray's poetry is utterly different from any that can be called English. . . . Austere and uncompromising, his work resembles the mountains of Scotland: grey, gaunt, cold, fog-bound—it is only on intimate approach that their marvellous colouring may be appreciated or their wealth of unobtrusive flowers discovered. So with these poems. They do not yield up their treasures to Tom, Dick, and Harry. A casual reading will not discover their beauties. Facile critics may well find them barren and forbidding. Dr Macgillivray does not write for such. The mountain will not go to Mahomet. Mahomet can come to the mountain, but it depends entirely upon Mahomet himself what he finds there. 'Eyes or no eyes?' These poems will measure the perceptive powers of many a reader in the most ruthless way. Those who have eyes to see, let them see."

Dr J. M. Bulloch perhaps hit upon the cause of Macgillivray's difference from most contemporary Scottish poets—and of his comparative unpopularity—when he wrote: "Dr Macgillivray is an artist to his finger-tips, and unlike many of our native artists, he can not only explain what he is driving at, but he can express himself with ease in more than one medium." He should have added that perhaps Macgillivray's main difference from most contemporary vernacular poets is that he actually is a poet and not a mere versifier. It is an effect of the present national and cultural subordination of Scotland to England that Macgillivray's work should be so little known and less appreciated by the great majority even of that small minority of his countrymen interested with any

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measure of aptitude in poetry, that his name would be perhaps the last to occur to them while, were they canvassing claims for the poet-laureatship of Scotland, they would be busy with such names as those of Charles Murray and Violet Jacob, both of whom stand on an altogether lower plane although each of them has achieved by happy accident, as Dr Macgillivray has not, a single poem which deservedly ranks as one of the little classics of Scots letters. But I entirely mistrust the judgment—and the adequate nationalism—of any critic concerned with Murray or Mrs Jacob and indifferent to Macgillivray, just as I condemn the vast majority of self-styled lovers of Scottish poetry who are bogged in an overwhelming admiration for Burns and a few others such as Motherwell and Fergusson, who belong to the same school and indifferent to, and indeed for the most part, entirely ignorant of the Old Makars on the one hand and on the other of Scottish poets wholly outwith the Kailyaird tradition such as Robert Buchanan and John Davidson, not to mention some of our great Gaelic bards. Mr James A. Morris has well said that, "as a sculptor Dr Macgillivray writes verse with a restraint that is not only natural but inevitable, and while he never riots as a colourist, he yet has and in abundance all the inherent Scots temperament of poetry, colour, and romance. The initial classical severity imposed by sculpture maintains, however, its traditional control, and it is this reticence and refinement of form that gives much of his verse its unusual aesthetic value." The Scottish Renaissance, so far as vernacular poetry is concerned, will not get properly underweigh until Dr Macgillivray's work is appreciated at its true value, and the technical lessons inherent in it studied and mastered by our coming poets. It offers many a useful lever to lift Scottish poetry out of the dreary and denationalised rut into which it has fallen. There is one point, however, upon which I am at thorough disagreement with Dr Macgillivray—his theory of Scots as a literary medium. He believes in the use of vernacular dialects in so far only as he has a living knowledge of their words, idioms, and accents, and says that "to assemble obsolete words from periods remote and from dialects of districts apart and strange to each other in idiom and in the pronunciation of the same words, may produce a kind of literary language of Scots for the scholarly appreciation of those who have

no intimacy with any of our dialects: but the result, although often witty enough, and obviously truly sympathetic in intention, can never, I think, touch the heart like a true native diction from any one of the quarters." So far as Scotland is concerned that remains to be seen; the literary history of other countries drives me to a contrary conclusion. I see no reason why an artificially and quite arbitrarily contrived "generalised" Scots should not yet become an effective medium just as the Norwegian *landsmål* has done. Dr Macgillivray's view is the conventional one of our vernacular revivalists or conservators: but a new nationalistic spirit is abroad and is elsewhere achieving—as it may yet even in Scotland—miracles unimaginal to an older generation. Macgillivray has justified his own methods in his own work: they were the proper methods for him. But other artists may yet arise who will have more revolutionary aims and objects and yet be not less Scottish than he is, if very differently so. Certain it is that even the dialectical integrity Macgillivray advocates appeals increasingly but to scholarly appreciation and is but little literary. And it should be remembered that Burns himself was of the opposite opinion—or, at least, of the opposite practice. For he did precisely what Macgillivray contemns—established his own canon of the vernacular—with very other results than those Macgillivray declares must follow any such attempt. And Burns's canon was, on the whole, for purely literary, as distinct from popular, ends a poor one and fell far short of the potentialities of Scots. Thinking along these lines, younger Scots to-day are at all events far less pessimistic as to the ultimate fate of the vernacular than Macgillivray has declared himself to be. The—if only potential—national status of the Doric must not be lost sight of, and mere regionalism is a poor substitute for it. Nor is it only from a nationalistic standpoint that a regard for dialectical demarcation is to be deplored: Scotland is not so rich in native genius, nor so large a country, that she can afford to have her poets expressing themselves in forms which require special local intimacies, which in the nature of things few can have, from their readers if their work is to be thoroughly appreciated. And Scottish poets are sufficiently handicapped if they write in the vernacular. And have, as matters stand, a sufficiently circumscribed public, without further handicapping themselves in that

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way by subscribing to a formula the ultimate outcome of which is progressive parochialisation and then obsolescence. Braid Scots must not be thus stereotyped into dialects: any Renaissance can only be achieved by bringing it fully into relation again with the life of the country as a whole.

Not only is Macgillivray one of the most important vernacular poets since Burns—one, indeed, of the very few really poets in any normal use of the term—but in occasional passages in some of his published addresses (notably in his 1911 address to the '45 Club in Edinburgh, appended to *Pro Patria*) he displays prose gifts which have been singularly lacking in Scotland recently. How far he might have gone in that direction had he been able to develop these gifts fully it is impossible to gauge. Suffice it to say that Scotland, despite what he has given it in other directions, can very ill afford to lose the prose of which he has shown himself potentially capable. Macgillivray has suffered not only in lack of due literary recognition and the circumscription of his influence, as well as financially, by being too wholly and purely Scottish in a sadly denationalised period: the same cause has largely inhibited him in his prime capacity as sculptor and artist by denying him the outlets he ought to have had—at least in far more generous measure—in a supposedly civilised country. These are lean enough times for sculpture even in larger and wealthier countries than Scotland, and sculpture has in great measure failed to adapt itself to the changed conditions obtaining in our highly-industrialised civilisation. Dr Macgillivray is a classical sculptor: he writes somewhere of "the inhumanities of this age of wheels." But then all but a moiety of contemporary Scots share his attitude; it is certainly not because he has any ultra-modern proclivities that he has been so largely denied the opportunities he ought to have had—but for the very much simpler reason that Scotland as a whole has not got beyond the stage of preferring "monumental masonry" to genuine sculpture of any kind. The difference is simply not appreciated. All sorts of tombstone makers pass for sculptors *pari passu* with Macgillivray in the general estimation—the general estimation not of the masses of the people even, but of what passes in Scotland for an intelligentsia. But it is vaguely realised that Macgillivray's "direction" is different somehow from

that of the others: their fashionable conventionalisms are preferred to his artistic integrity. He suffers too from his known attitude to Scottish arts and affairs, for political considerations affect public contracts. Macgillivray was the only sculptor associated with what came to be known widely as "The Glasgow School" in the eighteen-eighties. I have written elsewhere that "the Art of Sculpture can scarcely yet be said to have struck root in Scotland, notwithstanding a fair start in the first half of last century. But a writer discussing the Gladstone Memorial (Edinburgh—a composite work of nine figures) justly observed: 'Scotsmen all the world over, and especially those to whom their national art is dear, will welcome a monument that carries Scottish sculpture a stage further on its line to development. For, apart from a derivation from classic sources, inevitable at this date, it owes nothing to immediate foreign styles. In bearing, it is more tense, of higher potentiality, than current English: less flamboyant and picturesque, as distinguished from sculpturesque, than characteristically French and Flemish sculpture; and worlds away from the truculence and studied barbarousness of those graven images that Germanism has recently set up. By virtue of imagination and nervous execution the sculpture of the memorial is nearer to the High Renaissance of Italy than to any lesser and later neo-classic style!'" "Owing," I continued, "to the subordinate position of Scotland and the steady progress of Anglicisation Dr Macgillivray's genius has been denied the wider outlets it should have had. One writer points out that 'as is inevitable, perhaps, in a country in which sculpture is much less appreciated than painting, the opportunities offered to sculptors in Scotland are limited, and there is little encouragement to produce work of an idealistic character. . . . He (Macgillivray) has had regrettably few commissions for ideal sculpture on a large scale!' Not only so: but time and again those important public commissions which should have helped to strengthen the foundation of the art of sculpture in Scotland have foolishly been drafted away to London. The Gladstone Memorial itself had a narrow escape from going that road—would, indeed, have done so but for the late Sir George Reid. In other directions English predominance works to the disadvantage of Scottish artists seeking to develop distinctively Scottish traditions." The revival in his

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favour of the office of sculptor to His Majesty for Scotland in 1921—after it had been in abeyance for 30 years—may be taken as an index of the extent to which Dr Macgillivray has reversed an ignominious and demoralising state of affairs: but he has not yet acquired the influence which he would immediately exercise were a thorough-going national renaissance to develop. This happily does not affect his personal achievement, which stands ready to make its due influence felt if and when the time comes that an effective group of young men—and women—are ready to create a national school of sculpture. There is no sign of that time coming so far: but, against it, one would fain that Dr Macgillivray would write a succinct account—if only for posthumous publication—of the lets and hindrances to Scottish Art as he has encountered them. His relations with the Royal Scottish Academy—such matters as his spirited protest against the denial of a separate section to Scottish Art in the Wembley Exhibition—his knowledge of the intrigues and sycophancies of divers figureheads who occupy too much of the public eye to the detriment of truer artists—of these and kindred topics he has much to say and he would that might be of great moment to the younger men when—I will not say if—that happy conjunction of circumstances comes which, by re-orienting the minds of Scotsmen everywhere in an intensively nationalistic direction, will overthrow those influences against which he has so long, valiantly and single-handedly, contended, and let him be seen as the founder and fountain-head of a truly national school of sculpture and as one of the most delightful, versatile, bracing and vital artists Scotland has ever possessed and lamentably misprized, despite a certain amount of lip-service, and as a giant among pigmies so far as all his self-conceived rivals in the Art of Sculpture in Scotland to-day are concerned. Pittendrigh Macgillivray—the very name is a guarantee and a slogan! He will assuredly come into his own yet.

*Dr Macgillivray's books are:—"Boy Myrtle and Peat-Reek" (Printed Privately, 1922. One guinea) and "Pro Patria" (Messrs Robert Grant and Son, Edinburgh, 1915).*

*See also the following articles by the present writer:—"Pittendrigh Macgillivray I.—As Sculptor" (Scottish Nation, Oct. 9, 1923) and "Pittendrigh Macgillivray II.—As Poet" (Scottish Nation, Oct. 16, 1923.)*



## JAMES PITTENDRIGH MACGILLIVRAY.

*Dr Macgillivray's most important public works include Robert Burns (Irvine), 1893; the Dean Montgomery Memorial, St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh; the Dr Peter Cowe Memorial, Glasgow Cathedral; the Sir William Geddes Memorial, Aberdeen University; the John Knox Memorial, St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh; the Gladstone Memorial, Edinburgh; and the Byron Statue, Aberdeen.*

## CHAPTER NINE.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS, BART.

Sir George Douglas is bookish but not literary. His relationship to a real critic in any sense of the term is like that of an amateur to a professional. It is not so much that he does not take the business as seriously as that he does not (in more than one sense of the term) "make a business of it." One can have independent means, of course, and be a professional in the sense in which I am using the term; one does not require to be in any way dependent upon the proceeds of one's work or upon public appreciation—professionalism which entails any form of sycophancy or opportunism is, in fact, necessarily "unprofessional." It is not because Sir George Douglas is a "gentleman of letters" rather than a "slave of the pen" that he remains in the amateur class, nor is there a *cachet* attaching to that status that is absent from the other (save with those foolish people who affect even in a literary matter to despise the "merely literary," and discount expertise and specialism in favour of qualities naturally favoured by those who delight in dabbling, but are perilously aware that at any moment they may get out of their depth and so compromise on the sufficiently shallow which yet contrives to give the sensation of the adequately deep), but on the contrary! An amateur of this kind remains so because of insufficient incentive mainly, and because all is not grist that comes to his mill. He chooses his own material—the material does not bear down inexorably and incessantly upon him and strain his powers to the uttermost to cope with it. It is by the latter process

that the better critic is evolved. There were great tasks implicit in the matters which from time to time came under Sir George Douglas's view, but, his position being that of a dilettante, they did not force themselves upon him and compel him to deal with them in a fashion which has not infrequently discovered unsuspected powers to himself in a man, nor was Sir George Douglas ever moved to deal exhaustively with these matters, and as a consequence the majority of the unobtrusive opportunities lurking in them escaped his notice, or he was so *épris* by some idea of his own that he failed to recognise them for what they were. In any case the tasks went undone and the opportunities unseized. He picked and chose inconsequently, and, as those who are bookish but not literary necessarily must, was generally so preoccupied with superficial phenomena that he failed to detect the underlying movement, or, in other words, failed to see the wood for the trees. And the essence of a real critic is his conception of the wood. It matters little if he ignores this author or that and unduly magnifies another, so long as he conveys the *ethos* of a particular school or movement. He is not concerned with the interplay of lights or shadows over a particular reach of water so much as with the quality and force of the current. His facts may be inadequate or even erroneous: his feelings are what matter. It is the kind and direction of his mind that is important: literary history is *corpus vile* to him. But the "amateur" lacks, as a rule, the essential egotism and the programmaticism: he interposes only here and there as the mood takes him or some occasion demands—his work is comparatively impurposive. His work is less the product of a vital reaction than of a casual if recurrent or indeed more or less continuous impulse. His material has what importance it has: but no particular significance attaches to his own attitude towards it. Sir George Douglas is an amateur critic in this sense—in so far as he is a critic at all.

For "literary critic" means all sorts of things. Sir George Douglas's literary criticism is a blend of literary history, biographic detail, reminiscential matter and ordinary platitudinous padding, with a minimum of original evaluation or revaluation—of the genuine independent *de novo* and *du fond* work—a couple of paragraphs of which from a mind of any moment is worth a ton of the

other stuff which any hack can put together passably enough in these days of wide-spread literacy—though, to be sure, any hack cannot put it together as neatly and engagingly as some folks can. There are tricks in all trades—but the most effective conceivable presentation of matter of this kind remains at best but the trick of a trade. Why then devote an article to Sir George Douglas at all—or, at any rate, to his literary criticism? Because his position is a key to the condition of Scottish letters to-day. He is our representative critic in the general esteem of our cultured class or classes—or those of them, at any rate, who retain from one cause or another a special interest in Scottish life and letters as such: and it is against the Pyrrhonism of the spirit he and they embody and disengage that young Scots must be encouraged to direct their energies if a Scottish Literary Renaissance is to be encompassed. This is the type that has not relapsed into mere Burnsianism or Kailyairdism, still less is it denationalised—it retains an interest, unshared by any other class, in the whole range of Scottish history and literature: it buys what books are written on these matters: it is educated, and for the most part “well-educated”!: and is as a rule well-grounded in the classics and in those whom conservative British opinion (for conservative Scottish opinion in this matter is almost indistinguishably at one with its counterpart in England) regard as the most important modern European writers. The latter are for the most part known only in translations: French is, however, generally known, and a smaller number may combine with that German or Spanish or Italian or Russian—but the percentage who are trilingual or more and really *au fait* with the literatures of these countries as conservatively esteemed—eschewing the ultra-moderns—is exceedingly small. The number of contemporary Scots thoroughly abreast of *welt-literatur* cannot exceed a dozen at the outside—and of these how many are effectively so, either as creators or critics, how many have a point of view with regard to it of either national or international consequence? However that may be, it is a matter of prime importance to Scotland that this class to which I refer, and of which, and to a large extent to which, Sir George Douglas is the representative spokesman, should be maintained in its unfashionable regard for Scottish letters as a whole—rather than for Burns or Scott

or Stevenson—and for the idea of a distinctive Scottish culture and literary tradition, and that this interest and idea should be quickened and whatever evolutionary momentum resides in it released and effectively related to the position and prospects of Scotland—or rather the business of being Scottish—to-day. And it is equally a matter of prime importance that the appetencies of this class for foreign literatures should be effectively catered for and developed and that they should be fecundated with international ideas in such a fashion as to evoke vital national reactions and developments in taste and tendency, corresponding to and qualifying those in other countries. And by the extent to which he has fulfilled these functions Sir George Douglas must be judged in his capacity as a guardian and interpreter of Scottish letters on the one hand, and as *proxenos* or liaison officer with foreign letters on the other. In so far as what he has done shows him as in any measure naturally designed to fulfil these functions at this juncture in the history of Scottish letters, if only for want of better, he cannot be absolved of responsibility for what he has left undone. I am afraid that if this line of argument were pursued it would have to be admitted that so far from realising what was required in either direction he has done little to relieve the moribundity of attitude of this class to Scottish letters, he has failed even to attempt to stimulate it to any progressive position—although he may be conceded the negative achievement of having prevented it from losing even that sterile or at least comparatively profitless interest in Scottish letters which distinguishes it—while his international liaison work has been of a very scanty and on the whole ill-gauged and unproductive character. There is little or no livelier interest in Scottish letters and no wider acquaintance with foreign literatures in our midst attributable to his activities : and it may be that the existence, and comparative prominence, of these activities have prevented the emergence of other activities that would have been better-conceived and more effective. For there is only a limited amount of space available for articles on Scottish letters anywhere, or on foreign literatures in Scottish papers—only a limited number of opportunities in Scotland for lecturing on either : and Sir George Douglas has taken up for many years a considerable proportion of both.

To act in either capacity is not a task to be lightly

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undertaken, and whoever does so must justify himself in the issue. Is Sir George Douglas a critic capable of representing his country's viewpoint in *welt-literatur* and of being the interpreter of *welt-literatur* to his country? I have no hesitation in saying that no matter how impressive they were as lectures to the least literary body of students in any European country or to audiences with the *passèist* and sometimes pedantic and sometimes wholly provincial, and generally all three, proclivities of the sort of audiences available in Scotland, or however effectively they lightened the monotony of the week-end page of the *Glasgow Herald* or transcended the tittle-tattle of the usual run of "literary" articles in the *Weekly Scotsman*, nothing of literary criticism has been produced by Sir George that should have been found capable of acceptance by, say, *The Nation and Athenæum*, the *Spectator*, the *New Statesman*, let alone the *Fortnightly*, or the *Contemporary*, or the *Edinburgh*—and the contributors to any of these are relatively very small fry, and few achieve any real standing as critics. It is a measure of our condition in Scotland to-day that the writings of our leading literary critic should be comparatively empty and worthless, destitute of distinction in either content or form, as compared with the general level of pure literary journalism as exemplified in a score of organs over the Border. But, I will be at once told, scores of Scots write for these periodicals. Of course they do—but who are they? I know them, of course, but the Scottish reading public doesn't—they seldom, if ever, take a text from Scottish literature, they are for the most part indistinguishable from their English confreres, and certainly not one of them is a Scottish man of letters in the sense that Sir George Douglas is, living in Scotland, writing for the most part for Scottish papers and predominantly on Scottish matters, and addressing Scottish audiences. Sir George's reputation, such as it is, is practically confined to Scotland: he cuts no figure on the British literary stage as a whole. I am not contending that Sir George, who is essentially a conservative critic, ought to have developed intransigent attitudes of which he is constitutionally incapable, but simply that his work has a diathesis of progressive obsolescence rather than of effective conservation of even the little that within the limits of his disposition it has obviously been his desire and aim to conserve. Scot-



tish letters to-day, then, must present a hopeful appearance precisely in proportion to the impatience of those, whose concern is predominantly with them (who belong, that is to say, to this class of which I have spoken), with Sir George's work—to the extent to which it is becoming recognised as intolerably *vieux jeu*. But Professor Denis Saurat was right when he said that the aim of a Scottish Renaissance in any real sense of the term in this connection must be to bring the whole range of *welt-literatur* under distinctively Scottish tests, and, on the other hand, to create a condition of affairs under which those interested in literature will, when there is anything new afoot, be at least as apt to ask: "What is Scotland thinking about it?" as "What is England thinking about it?" No other state of affairs is compatible with Scottish pride: and an ambition that falls below that is a form of treason to our particular racial genius and, indirectly, to civilisation as a whole. Judged by these standards it cannot be denied that Sir George's work falls lamentably far short: and it is a negative consolation to reflect that even so, within the confines of Scotland to which he is one of the few even of his abilities, let alone higher abilities, to adhere, there is no other living man of his generation who has done better than he has done. Compare anything that he has written with the "literary" journalism of Dr Lauchlan Maclean Watt, for example, or Mr Davidson Cook or Mr D. H. Edwards or Mr W. Forbes Gray and the scores of others who periodically re-discuss the authorship of "There's nae luck aboot the Hoose" or give the "Immortal Memory" in even the principal Burns Clubs every January or earn the F.S.A. (Scot.) in other ways: he is a welcome and wholesome and even distinguished figure in comparison with any of these—but then, on the other hand, just to get him into proper perspective, compare him with, say, Professor Gregory Smith, whose book on "Scottish Literature" is, with all its faults, the first text-book I would like to place in the hands of any young Scot likely to play a part in bringing about a National Renaissance, just as—not Hume Brown and certainly not Professor Rait, but the section on Scotland in Buckle's "History of Civilisation" is the text-book for history I would prefer to see in use. The main trouble with Sir George Douglas is that all his thinking has been severely limited to conventional lines: the

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only distinction of his critical work that it happened to be the convention of his class to have a piety for Scottish literature that differentiates their judgment to some extent from that of less national critics—while leaving it essentially the same sort of judgment: for English and often Anglo-Scottish critics have the same sort of piety for English letters of the more *passèist* schools. The literary output of his own country during the period of his activity is very often an index to the quality of a critic. Sir George, as the preface to his "Minor Scottish Poetry" shows, is fully aware of the straits to which distinctively Scottish literature has been reduced, and of at least some of the causes; but he is impotent—he has nothing origina-tive to say. He can point to our historic values, but he can suggest no lines along which we can recover and continue them, meet our modern situation and its requirements more adequately, and even advance more safely towards the opening future. His work opens no fresh outlooks, clearer discussions or further initiatives. He has given the Scottish literary tradition of which he has written and lectured no new lease of life, but simply preserved a moribundity of outlook which characterises an ever-diminishing class who have provided themselves with no successors: and, far abler and better-equipped and less puerile and provincial than all but a few of the moving spirits in the Burns Movement to-day, he has failed to do or even to assist them to do what they have done—build up a world movement which despite its present discreditable and futile enough condition is not perhaps incapable of ultimate transmutation into a genuine cultural force, distinctively Scottish in its provenance and directive personnel; and, more recently, initiate a Vernacular Revival Movement, the tremendous literary potentialities of which are unapparent to the vast majority of the workers in and for it who, indeed, belong in every respect to an inferior category of our people to the class of which Sir George is at least a picturesque if ineffectual figurehead. Sir George has "cut no ice." Compare him with Brandes, who has achieved a world-wide reputation despite the fact that he is a citizen of a country with only two and a half million population, and writes in a language rarely studied by foreigners. As Ernest Boyd has said: "The life of George Brandes has been one of challenge and combat, of criticism that is creative and constructive, and the record

of his accomplishment is the final answer to his opponents. As the intellectual mentor of his own country he can claim for his disciples such men as Holger Drachman, J. P. Jacobsen, Erik Skram, and Sophus Schandorph, and as the interpreter of Scandanavian literature abroad he can point to his championship of Kielland, Strindberg, Ibsen, Björnson; his writings on Oehlenschlaegar, Holberg, and Anderson. There is hardly a writer in the Scandanavian countries about whom he has not had an effective and timely word to say. He translated John Stuart Mill; was the first to recognise Nietzsche; and his studies of Renan, Taine, Lassalle, and the French Realists, his classical study of Shakespeare, show him as the intellectual bridge between Scandania and the rest of Europe." Who are Sir George Douglas's disciples, whom has he championed against odds, what has he done to bridge the gulf between Scotland and Europe? It is not a question merely of his being a pigmy compared with Brandes—but of whether he might not have achieved more if he had had a different conception of the critic's function, a conception that it is to be hoped some Scottish critic in however small a measure will soon begin to show! Sir George certainly does not deserve the forgiveness to which those who have worked hard are entitled: and if he would have done more had the Scottish Press afforded greater facilities—then it is relevant to ask if he ever attempted to increase these facilities. As matters stand he leaves them scantier and poorer than when he began his career: and any emerging Scottish George Brandes on even the smallest scale would to-day have to create his own Press, or become his own publisher even.

An appreciative article on Sir George Douglas appears in Mr Parker's "Modern Scottish Writers," and I agree with a great deal that it says. But my acquiescence with almost everything of a flattering character than can be said of his work—when it is considered in relation to what any other of his contemporaries have done in like fields of letters—vanishes when I measure him according to the European scale. At the same time there are poems of his—one or two—that should not be lacking from any such anthology as "The Edinburgh Book of Scottish Verse," and I have a lively affection for certain studies of old Border life which he has written. "*Rarement un écrivain est si bien inspiré que lorsqu'il se raconte,*" said

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Anatole France, and it is certainly true that Sir George Douglas is far and away at his best in certain pieces of personal reminiscence, and it is by the quality of these in their interpretation, and, almost, reproduction, of vanished or vanishing aspects of Scottish life that he deserves to be remembered. And in "The Fireside Tragedy" before the emergence of the present movement towards a Scottish National Drama, he showed himself for once *en rapport* with the becoming tendencies of Scottish Arts, and wrote a drama that in some respects compares not unfavourably with any that has yet been produced by the new—and only—school of Scottish playwrights, and might perhaps with a little adaptation suit the boards of the Scottish National Players.

*Sir George Douglas's books are:—Poems, 1880; The Fireside Tragedy, 1886; The New Border Tales, 1892; The Blackwood Group, 1897; Poems of a Country Gentleman, 1897; edition of Scottish Minor Poets; History of the Border Counties; Life of James Hogg, 1899; Diversions of a Country Gentleman, 1902; The Man of Letters, 1903; Life of Major-General Wauchope, 1904; The Panmure Papers, 1908; The Border Breed, 1909; Scottish Poetry (Drummond to Fergusson), 1911; The Pageant of the Bruce, 1911; and The Book of Scottish Poetry, 1911.*

*See also W. M. Parker's "Modern Scottish Writers"; and article on "Sir George Douglas" by present writer in Scottish Nation, November 13, 1923.*

## CHAPTER TEN.

FREDERICK NIVEN : J. J. BELL.

Writing in the *Northern Review* of May, 1924, with regard to the novels of Mr John Sillars, about which I shall have something to say when I come to discuss the younger Scottish novelists, Mr A. R. Williams observed that : " The novel as a Scottish genre seems almost to have gone out of existence. There is evidence in plenty in the catalogues that novels are being written by Scotsmen, but they are not writing Scottish novels, not even those who place their story in a Scottish setting, and the whole trend of things literary and economic seems to indicate that a Scottish renaissance will find the novel its most difficult obstacle to surmount. The only encouragement one can obtain is to note that here and there there are Scots writers of the younger generation—Mr Blake, for example—who are trying to move towards a novel which in treatment and spirit shall be national. Among these is Mr Sillars." If Mr Blake is, indeed, making an effort to achieve anything of the kind, it is high time that he recognised that *Mince Collop Close* is a *cul-de-sac*, and, questions of literary value apart, about as Scottish as a Polish village in Lanarkshire or the Annual Meeting of the Confederation of Scottish Ice-Cream Merchants—but a year ago I would nevertheless have been in substantial agreement with what Mr Williams said as to the prospects of a genuinely Scottish school of fiction. I would have been emphatically of the opinion that a pre-requisite to the emergence of anything of the kind would be the re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, with powers not less than

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those of the Free State Government in Ireland. Only such a political development, I would have said, can carry in its train that reorientation of journalism and book-publishing which will provide the necessary media of publication and that separation of interests tending cumulatively to create a public, with a different response to the English public, for which such a school will naturally cater. Now I am not so sure. It may be that effective cultural devolution will precede rather than follow political devolution. If so, the latter will, of course, inevitably follow, and not until it does will the former be freed of very serious and otherwise insurmountable handicaps. But since Mr Williams wrote there have been many signs that the Scottish renaissance movement is making more rapid headway in this particular direction than could then have been reasonably anticipated. There has been the emergence of what has already been labelled the Glasgow School—represented in such novels as Mr Cockburn's "Tenement" and Mr Caruthers' "The Virgin Wife." I shall deal with these more specifically in due course. But, having made this initial point, I must promptly qualify what I have said. By claiming such phenomena of recent publishing as the novels of this young "Glasgow School" as evidence of the headway that is being made by the Scottish renaissance movement, I do not mean that they are contributions to a definite programme for the creation of a distinctive Scottish literature comparable in every respect to the literatures of other countries—which is the aim of the Scottish renaissance movement, properly so-called—but rather that they are proofs of the widespread movement, taking many different forms at the present time, which those concerned with the express propaganda on behalf of a Scottish Renaissance during the past four or five years, have partly divined to exist and brought to a knowledge of itself, and partly created, even in some respects in opposition to the ideas put forward. In other words, the promoters of the Scottish Renaissance movement have all along realised that their ends could be achieved best by attracting some of their compatriots and antagonising others, their principle in this respect has been that embodied in the lines

"Speak weel o' my son,

Speak ill o' my son

But aye be speakin',"

and they believe that in the balance of these opposite

effects will be achieved that all-round national awakening which is their objective.

I am personally of the opinion that the work of writers such as Messrs Blake, Cockburn, and Carruthers, for example—and of any other contemporary Scottish novelist so far except Mr Neil Gunn—must be regarded as the products of antagonisation to the radical principle implied in the propaganda of the Scottish Renaissance movement, a quickening, a readjustment to suit a keener national spirit of criticism of Anglo-Scottish elements rather than the breaking-through of something generically Scottish. That is, a defensive movement of the very elements that any literary movement of the slightest value must be attacking. They are in the position to take a political analogy, of offering this or that form of devolution in place of sovereign independence. They have not yet effected a perdurable compromise, if any compromise can be perdurable with the elements involved—they have not come to effective terms with the basic considerations. The novel is a distinctive form in France, in Russia, and in England, for example—the younger American writers are moving towards the discovery of a distinctively American form of the novel. In Scotland, if the work of the writers I have mentioned—or the novels of older writers of more completely Anglo-Scottish times, such as Frederick Niven and J. J. Bell—is to be regarded in any measure as moving towards “a novel which in treatment and spirit shall be national,” we are restricted to priding ourselves upon naively trying to do in and for Scotland to-day what every other country in Europe has long since achieved, more fully and more finely. The significant fact about the contemporary novel of literary consequence in every European country to-day is the endeavour to get away from the commercial recipe—the size the publishers have stereotyped—the set number of chapters which have no correspondence whatever with the incidence of vital experience; and so forth. No contemporary Scottish novelist appears to be sufficiently modern to have been infected with this desirable experimentalism—to have the faintest realisation that the orthodox novel convention is a demoded form for which an effective substitute is being seriously—and necessarily—sought by artists whose mere realisation of this in itself gives them a significance beyond that of the most diligent and successful adherent of the



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old thirty-six chapters formula. Not only are they thus technically belated or impotent: but none of them is sufficiently Scottish either to come to grips with the whole problem of the "novel as a Scottish genre." It is nothing of the kind—it is an alien importation that has so far only shown itself susceptible of very intermittent and partial naturalisation. The problem therefore for a would-be novelist of the Scottish Renaissance is to devise a form of the novel that is specifically Scottish—as different in form and method from the English or the French novel as Scots psychology is from English or French—or to devise a specifically Scottish form that will successfully anticipate, so far as Scotland is concerned, the issue of the present widespread search for a substitute for the novel-form. The latter, I would submit, is the likelier ambition. If Scotland is to re-enter the stream of European letters it will not be on the strength of "Piper's News" either in matter or manner—and, although it would have its uses, the translation into Scottish form of the various kinds of the novel that have already been fully developed elsewhere would be no achievement from the point of view of creative art. Scotland, like any other country, must have its contribution to *welt-literatur* assessed in respect of its independent creative values and vehicles—not by what it has in common, technically and otherwise, with other literatures: but by what is peculiarly, or, at any rate, primarily its own. To anyone *au fait* with world-literature the achievements of Mr Blake and his successors—as of their predecessors like Messrs Niven and Bell—are but "cauld kail het again," however appetising that may be to the less cultivated tastes of the unprofessional Scottish reader—and none the more tolerable because the *rechauffé*, which formerly passed under this or that German or French name, such as *Naturalismus*, is now served up as Mince Collops, or, cannibalistically, Virgin Wives, and has stood for too long before being reheated.

Both Mr Niven and Mr Bell came to the fore before the present conceptions of a distinctively Scottish literature began to be canvassed, and though neither is superannuated there are reasons for believing new departures on their part—at any rate new departures of any particular consequence even in the restricted field of Scottish letters as at present constituted—improbable. They are, in Mr

Williams' phrase, Scotsmen whose novels, despite Scottish settings, are certainly not Scottish. On the other hand, any interest that does attach to their novels is a Scottish interest, for as novels—so far as any wider field than that of contemporary Scottish literature is concerned—they are not of the very slightest consequence. In the issue of the *Northern Review*, to which I have already referred, in a useful if superficial and scrappy article on "Some Scottish Novelists" since Scott, Miss Agnes Stewart remarked that "it may be worth noticing that the novel in Scotland has followed an opposite course from that in France. In the latter country, writers like René Bazin and Maurice Barrés have made a powerful effort to turn the attention of readers from the intrigues of town life, and to fix it upon the peasant life of outlying districts, whilst in this country the novel is only now becoming conscious of the town. It is surprising that the metaphysical Scot, with his love of moralising and his tendency to introspection, has not produced work of the realistic and problematic kind found in France and Russia. The crowding of our Highland and Lowland populations into busy commercial centres, with the introduction of an Irish element, has created conditions which should lend themselves to dramatic treatment. Still, we have no work of fiction resembling Dostoevsky's 'Crime and Punishment?'" That "still" is, I am afraid, sadly typical of the quality of Scottish literary criticism. It is as if we observed that we had numerous diligent tombstone-makers in Scotland, and yet, curiously enough, no Sphinx or Pyramid—or that while we lack a Taj Mahal, on the other hand we have our own Gleneagles Hotel and the Waverley Station. And again, in any sound generalisation on the comparative state of the novel in France and in Scotland, René Bazin and Maurice Barrés are scarcely the writers to be taken as representative of the former. Both these Russian and French references, indeed, are all too illustrative of the inanity of even the most progressive contemporary Scottish outlook on the field of comparative criticism. It is not by such amateurish references and haphazard analogies that an adequate conception of *welt-literatur*—and the present relation and future potentialities of Scottish letters in regard thereto will be secured. I do not make these observations captiously. I believe that it is largely due to the poor quality of literary criticism in Scotland

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that the general ineptitude and indistinction of modern Scottish letters is attributable: and on the other hand I believe that Scottish writers such as the two I am presently dealing with and their younger followers I have mentioned suffer very greatly from being insufficiently "literary"—from having inadequate conceptions of the technique of their craft. In literature, as in science, I deem it essential—in so far as any contribution to creative art is concerned—to be as thoroughly abreast of contemporary world-developments as possible. Both Messrs Niven and Bell—and, happily to a decreasing extent, their younger successors now emerging—have suffered, too, from being born into a bad period so far as Scotland itself is concerned. Miss Stewart's remark regarding the absence of realistic and problematic work in Scotland resolves itself into the fact that Scotland has not yet been realised as Scotland—Anglicisation has thrust its problems out of the sphere of practical politics, and as a consequence created a public opinion which, aided by the Anglo-Scottish Press, finds them unreal and negligible, while irrelevant issues assume the guise of reality and monopolise the public mind. And, as part of the same complex process, while the actual conditions and problems of contemporary Scotland go largely undiscussed and are made to appear unrealistic, typically Scottish mentalities, instinctively realising the lack of something essential to them in this Anglo-Scottish "ethos," find compensation in a ridiculous romanticisation of the past or in a piddling sentimentalism. Both Niven and Bell, in their attitude to Scotland, share these conditions: this transmogrifying film of unreality comes between them and Scottish realities and affects the quality of their reporting and largely determines the type of issue that presents itself to such selective faculties as they possess. A spark of genius in either would have broken through this film and got down to fundamentals: it is a radical defect of their inspiration itself that has rendered it unable to reject merely the aspects which the existing system has thrust forward and to insist upon "the whole story." The essence of their failure lies in the fact that they have attempted to deal with matters which their pre-conceptions unconsciously falsified—in a way that the subject-matter of great, or even real, art can never be falsified—and, therefore, technically, in a manner not determined by the truth of the matter—the only legitimate determinant of form.

I am afraid, too, that both of them have suffered from that subtle subversion of such talents as were once, if not still potentially theirs, which affects writers of a certain facility and of inadequate originality when they find that certain kinds of work they do are more readily saleable than others and more popular—if only immediately so. At the same time, while yielding to commercial suggestion, in this way, the popularity and commercial success of both has been less than that of many inferior writers of substantially the same type simply because these elements of their work were not the most natural to them—for even best-selling stuff demands a singleness of purpose, and no intrusion, even in inverse form, of elements appertaining to other categories. Both Niven and Bell are partially conscious artists—not sufficiently conscious to make good in a purely literary sense, and yet just too conscious to sink to the level appropriate to the Big Public. They have fallen between various stools. Yet I am not sure that either of them would have gone *very* much farther than they have done in the purely literary sense had this dichotomy been resolved. Neither of them have the fundamental attitude to the art of letters essential to work of sufficient quality in any genre to command the slightest international attention. Both suffer from an inferiority complex. This is most marked in Niven—as witness the following passage from the prologue to “A Tale That Is Told”: “Arabesques and whorls, lightnings and convolutions are all very well to make a thin theme and paltry days seem a *tour de force* in the telling. I always suspect writers like Meredith and Carlyle of wishing to seem sages because of the violence they do to language.” “What I have to do is to tell my story.” Confessions such as these are sufficiently illuminating as to the root trouble in this writer’s case. He does not escape the consequences of his puerile attitude to art—product, as it is, of an inner sense of inadequacy to his ambitions rather than of any counter-theory. The pretentious references to all sorts of writers—Bridges, Vernon Lee, Francis Thompson, Crashaw, Patmore, Wordsworth—in “A Wilderness of Monkeys” are evidence of the same disease—a green-sickness of the intellect. Bell is not subject to such blatancies and inequalities—his work, in such books as “The Whalers” (compare this with Hermann Melville’s “Moby Dick”)

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and "Thou Fool," is more "of a piece," more consistently worked out, mainly as a consequence of more thorough documentation. But, even so, how negative an achievement—how far from the exactitude in detail, the apparent omniscience, the inexhaustible interest, the complete relation of a Balzac, and at this time of day we are surely not to forget the limitations of mere photographic realism—or how a single touch of genius can make the best organisation of facts intolerable. Nor are either Bell or Niven really realistic: their work is slabs of sentiment masquerading as slices of life. Of Niven's "Justice of the Peace," the *Graphic* reviewer declared that it was "stronger than anything that has appeared since 'The House with the Green Shutters'." It would have been difficult to hit upon a phrase which showed a more horrible incapacity for literary criticism. "The House with the Green Shutters" will remain a landmark in Scottish literary history for two reasons—its timeousness and the enormous power with which it realised, and affected, taste and tendency. "Justice of the Peace," or Bell's "Thou Fool," though in some ways substantially of the same kind as "The House with the Green Shutters" had no such timeousness and completely failed either to align themselves with and carry further—or to interpose against and controvert—any stream of taste and tendency. In the strict sense of the terms they were both impurposive and impotent—and the inability of their authors to ensure effect and create a position in the way Douglas did is the exact measure of their inferiority to him; for, if they had had the profounder intuition they lacked, the sense of opportunity, the conjunction of purpose and power, that in itself would have lifted their style to a higher plane and evoked the best of which they were capable. But they have never been moved to anything of consequence. They have nothing to say—only as Niven says, but in a different sense, "stories to tell." Or, as another critic has said of their type elsewhere, "however they function, their activities are *in vacuo*, and have no effect on the people—unless it be a lethal, financial one." They have never reached behind, as it were, the productions displayed on the nearest railway bookstall to the *ground* of their art. Both have written a certain amount of verse—of a type suitable to the collections of the Glasgow Ballad Club—but of not the slightest ultimate value. The traditions of

the Glasgow Ballad Club, indeed, are such that not one of its members has contributed to it a single poem that will live in Scottish literature while the great bulk of the work contributed to its collections, or published elsewhere by its members, is of a kind that amply illustrates the pass to which poetry in Scotland had been reduced—not among the Kailyaird school, but among those who fancied themselves and were accepted as our literati—for several decades before the new movement emerged some five or six years ago, and at once exposes the utter inadequacy alike in technique and motivation that was being assiduously cultivated and cherished in such circles, and nevertheless still is.

Niven now lives in Canada—but it must be said that Canada has not quickened his art in any way. Rather the reverse. Despite the extent to which Scots emigrants have influenced most of our colonies, their cultural effect has been, if not negligible, at least non-creative. They have contributed practically nothing to the movements now discernible in all the colonies to create independent literatures. Nor if their exile from Scotland has increased their affection for it has that feeling found creditable literary expression—any more than it has resulted in a realistic preoccupation with Scottish affairs, such as, for example, that of the American-Irish in the fight for Irish freedom. Niven's Canadian work, such as "Penny Scot's Treasure" is a mere commercial product—vastly inferior to Jack London's work, for example. And the difference between a genuine cultural reaction to Canada and Canadian life, and such a localisation of a stock-form destitute of real creative impulse and artistic integrity can be seen by comparing that novel with Louis Hémon's "*Maria Chapdelaine: Récits du Canada français*"—Just as, in the sphere of poetry, Niven's verses can profitably be compared with Louis Fréchetté's *Fleurs boréales*.

Bell's output has been much greater and much more varied than Niven's—and he has achieved one outstanding success—his creation of "Wee Macgregor." This had an immense—and well-deserved—vogue for a while: and seems to have fallen into quite undeserved oblivion. It is worth all the rest of Bell's output—and the whole of Niven's put together. Much of Bell's subsequent writing, alike in prose and in drama, has been in the form of variations or cyclic permutations of this lucky hit: but



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none of these have recaptured that "first fine careless rapture." It must not be thought that I am overvaluing "Wee Macgregor"—on the contrary, I realise its inability to stand against the great comic creations of other literatures: and yet although it is merely superficial comedy and fails to realise the tremendous *vis comica* resident in Scottish life and every now and again disappointingly adumbrated by writers of insufficient stature to cope with it effectively—one of the great tasks that still awaits the man and the hour—I am of opinion that it, far more than merely proportionately to the literary stature of modern Scotland compared with other European countries, provides a Scottish equivalent to the best humorous literature that has been produced anywhere in the twentieth century. "Wee Macgregor" is worth a bushel of Peter Pans, Wendys, and the like—and, although it may seem to have enjoyed merely a passing vogue, I believe that it will always continue to find its readers and that it will be recognised as one of the few really distinctive and valuable products of its period in Scotland and occupy a place in the literary history of Scotland that would vastly surprise those who—including perhaps its author—regard it as a mere trifle not to be compared with solemn work such as "Justice of the Peace" or "Thou Fool," for both of which and a whole shelf of similar productions by the same and other authors (respectable enough work in many ways although they are, and certainly the best of their kind contemporary Scotland has so far yielded), I would not barter a page of "Wee Macgregor"—though I am in no danger of overestimating the importance of that engaging youngster either!

John Joy Bell's books include: "Wee Macgregor" (1902); "Clyde Songs" (1906); "Thou Fool" (1907); "The Whalers" (1914); "The Little Grey Ships" (1916); etc. etc. For full list see "Who's Who."

Frederick John Niven's books include *Novels*, *A Wilderness of Monkeys*, *Ellen Adair*, *Justice of the Peace*, *Two Generations*, etc.; *Short Stories*, *Above Your Heads*, *Sage Brush Stories*; *Verses*, *Maple-leaf Songs*, etc. etc.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN.

SIR RONALD ROSS : RONALD CAMPBELL MACFIE.

Sir Ronald Ross was the only Scottish poet—legitimately so called, for Edward Shanks although a Scotsman is no more a Scottish poet than Stuart Merrill is an American one—who was included amongst the contributors to the first volume of "Georgian Poetry": and at that time, except Lord Alfred Douglas, Douglas Ainslie, and Ronald Campbell Macfie, whom else had we that could have been so included without gross anomaly? He was—and any of the other three I have mentioned would have been—sufficiently equal in accomplishment and similar in manner to fit in with the other members of the group. At all events the pieces by which he was represented were worthy of their inclusion and amenable to the spirit of the collection generally—and pieces could have been chosen from any of the other three with a similar result. But apart from this quartette of little-known poets—little-known by their poetry at all events—there was at that time no other Scottish poet deserving of inclusion, or whose work, if represented, could have sustained comparison with the average level of the other poems given in respect of technical accomplishment and plane of poetry involved, let alone identity of tradition. A great deal has happened since then. Of the third series of "Northern Numbers" even the *Times Literary Supplement* admitted that "the Scottish Georgians are in every way the equals of their English contemporaries." This is not, however, a claim that I would put forward myself—the English Georgians have severally an address,

a range, a body of work, and a representative status and influence that not one of the Scottish Georgians has yet reached. The latter may—and I think do—attain an equal level in isolated poems: but taking their output in all, the work of any of the former is still both qualitatively and quantitatively greatly superior to that of any of the latter. I am thinking as I write this, however, of the fundamental Georgians—Walter de la Mare (who owes, I think, his most distinctive qualities to his Scots blood), J. C. Squire, Edward Shanks, Lascelles Abercrombie, W. H. Davies, W. W. Gibson and one or two others—not of such later and slighter recruits as Mrs Shove, William Kerr and Richard Hughes, whose inclusion was simply unaccountable, on literary grounds at all events, and certainly unjustified. But if certain of the “Scottish Georgians”—George Reston Malloch, Edwin Muir, Muriel Stuart, and F. V. Branford, say—were to be asked to join with their English contemporaries in a new volume of “Georgian Poetry,” it would be much more difficult, if not impossible, to cull from their work poems which would “go with” the others than it would have been ten to twelve years ago to secure such an amenable selection from the work of Ross, Macfie, Ainslie and Douglas: while, if really representative examples of their work were chosen, the relation between them and their fundamental difference from the others would, I think, be clear enough to create the feeling of “a school within a school” at least. As I shall try to show later, these differences derive in unbroken descent from the Old Makars and constitute and perpetuate the independent literary traditions of Scotland which, on close analysis, have always been discernible even when Scottish letters have seemed most submerged in English—better preserved there, indeed, than in the Kailyairdism which ostensibly exemplifies them. My point is that our independent Scottish traditions are becoming better accentuated—displaying their basal differences from English traditions more clearly—than they did ten, let alone thirty, years ago. The radical difference in “direction” is once again unmistakably asserting itself. Saltatory developments impend.

Ten years ago Sir Ronald Ross and Ronald Campbell Macfie were exemplifying Scottish poetical genius in the medium of English in a manner similar—but less

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Scottish externally, at any rate—to that of their predecessors like Robert Buchanan, John Davidson, and “Fiona Macleod” behind whom in turn, spaced out with many minor figures, tower such comparative giants as Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell and, still further back, Ben Jonson. This is the Scottish element in English poetry. In my opinion it is once more on the upgrade: and under an identity of technique and superficial similarity of subject-matter and tendency it may yet accumulate sufficient strength to split English poetry into two separate schools, if not to subjugate in turn the predominant tradition and assert the supremacy of another that has long been subordinate to it, and, indeed, for the most part negligible. In this connection what Gordon Bottomley said in his “Poems of Thirty Years” as to the difficulty now of writing great poetry in the English central tradition and of the extent to which essential repetition and imitation have become inevitable, is a clear pointer to some such development. In the possibility so conceived, at any rate, there is surely sufficient to fire the laggard ambition of the Scottish muse to unprecedented effort. The emergence of a major Scottish poet at this juncture, effectively subsuming (in the medium of English) the tendencies latent in the difference of Scottish psychology from that of our “predominant partner,” and more especially so if his work in subject-matter and setting were defiantly Scottish, would be a welcome reversal of the state of affairs which has existed so long—whether it opposed to the central English tradition a new canon which would dominate the future as long and as powerfully as that has done the past, or, whether, as *The Glasgow Herald* in advocating literary devolution contends, it was merely destined to have the salutary effect of giving a more spacious balance to English letters at a time when over-centralisation has induced a species of cultural vertigo.

Neither Sir Ronald Ross nor Dr Macfie (to return *à nos moutons*) have yet received anything like their due at the hands of contemporary criticism. I have already indicated that in my opinion they are figures of equal importance to all but the major Georgians—and yet while innumerable essays are devoted to the work

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of most of these and full-dress volumes to Walter de la Mare and John Masefield, and scarcely anything can be written about modern English poetry without involving a definite attitude to their work, it would not be in the least surprising if set studies of the period failed to include any reference to these two. Why is this? Is it because despite their command of all the external shibboleths there is at the base of their work an undisguisable difference—a subtle diathesis of subversion—the fact that their work is, despite all its appearances, not English but Scottish, and, in the last analysis, directed to ends at variance with any possibility of complete assimilation? I can account for it in no other way, and this explanation is in keeping with the whole history of English and Scottish literary, and cultural, relationships. Look at Binyon's recent anthology designed to supplement Palgrave where Scottish poetry, in English, receives the scurviest and most unjustifiable treatment. Look at any other anthology of modern British verse—in none of them do Scottish poets receive proportionate representation. The seriousness of this lies in the fact that—as an inevitable consequence of the Union of Parliaments—publishing and literary journalism have become almost entirely centred in London, with the result that the whole machinery of publicity is in the hands of those who are inevitably most anxious for the complete assimilation of Scotland to England and most opposed to any nationalistic developments in the North likely to seek, and in the end secure, a reorientation. I do not say that literary journalism and publishing under the existing conditions are the monopoly of Englishmen—or, to a large extent, dominated by successive relays from Oxford and Cambridge; I am well aware that the Scot is ubiquitous and always “amang the heid yins”—and that many of the brilliant intellectuals Cambridge and Oxford send down annually are Scots. But I raise the question as to whether the existing state of affairs is equitable as between English and Scottish writers—and the further question as to whether, even if the apparent unfairness to Scottish writers of which I complain is not necessarily attributable to the system but to other and subtler causes, such an independent Scottish press and publishing trade as would inevitably accompany the re-establishment of an independent Scottish Parliament,

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would not positively promote Scottish letters in a fashion impossible under existing conditions and location in Scotland benefit Scottish writers, by freeing them from the necessity of certain kinds of protective camouflage. However these questions may be answered, a formidable body of evidence can be adduced to show that a comparatively inferior English poet can secure an amount of appreciative notice, a status as one of the poets of his time, a place in the anthologies, and the other concomitants or sequelæ of recognition which are invariably denied to Scottish poets of superior calibre writing in English. If there were no Scottish poets of a moment equal to those contemporary English poets whom what is really English, although it purports to be British, literary journalism regards as in the first rank, then that would point to there being something in the existing system facilitative of English and inhibitive of Scottish poetical talent, and would, at any rate, accentuate the fact that there is a difference between them and that they respond differently to substantially the same stimuli. If there are Scottish poets of equal moment who are comparatively neglected, then obviously Scottish cultural interests are being systematically subordinated and sacrificed to English. In my opinion the actual state of affairs is partly due to each of these causes. There are no contemporary Scottish poets writing in English equal, and, therefore equally deserving of critical consideration, to the best contemporary English poets (who are not all Georgians)—largely because English is not a language in which any Scotsman can adequately express himself, but even more because of the provincialisation of Scotland and the consequent inhibition of the highest potentialities in Scottish culture. On the other hand, there are Scottish poets equal in every respect to the majority of those after the first five or six whose names would leap to the mind if the subject of contemporary English poetry were raised: but while the latter are thus well known the former have had practically no "press" at all and their successive books are practically still-born. Of the older generation of these, the two poets with whom I am dealing—along with Lord Alfred Douglas and Douglas Ainslie, with whom I shall deal later—are



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the most important. In Scotland itself, they are to all intents and purposes, unknown outwith a very restricted class of reader—a class, at that, which largely if not entirely accepts the current English valuations, and would be indistinguishable from the general body of British readers of contemporary poetry were it not for a tendency to attach rather more importance to such Scottish poets as these two than the literary journals accord them—and the term “Scottish Poetry” both at home and abroad certainly conjures up something in which they have no part. “Scottish Poetry” in this sense remains a “country cousin,” a very poor relation, of English. I do not refer to the plethora of our local bards. But imagine Buchan or Violet Jacob or Neil Munro—at their very best, in English—in any of the Georgian series! It is not so much the difference between Scottish and English poetry that would be then revealed and thrust into devastating relief—as the difference between poetry of a comparatively high quality and verse of so low a kind as to be comparatively non-poetry.

Both Sir Ronald Ross and Dr Macfie are not only poets but scientists. Dr Macfie has written a large number of popular science books; Sir Ronald Ross's name is imperishably associated with the discovery of the mosquito cause and cure of malaria: he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1902. Despite the fact that Sir Ronald Ross is the editor of “Science Progress,” however, and two of his volumes of poetry are respectively entitled “Philosophies” and “Psychologies,” his ideology is of what may be called the Right Centre. Modern scientific conceptions and their terminology have no more affected his poetry than they affected Tennyson's: a process of syncretism reconciles it to conventional morality and orthodox culture to such an extent that it might easily be the product of the Victorian Age, or still more easily of the Elizabethan. He has passages in which the Keatsian quality shines more magically than anywhere else outwith Keats himself: and passages, again, which Shakespeare might have signed. Dr Macfie is even more destitute of the cachet of contemporaneity—in form and content his work belongs to the mainstream of poetry written in English. This can never be said of really great poets—they are at once of their time and of all time—their best work rises like a rock above the

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mainstream, resisting all levelling. Both Ross and Macfie pay the penalties of this conventionalism: their work too frequently becomes facile, is too like this, that, or the other thing that has gone before: they are not engaged in the essential task of poetic genius—the ceaseless effort to extend the range of human consciousness. There are real dangers in not sharing the significant preoccupations of one's own time—in relying more upon what an age has in common with the past than upon what differentiates it from any that has gone before—and neither of these poets have been adequately aware of them. The major content of their work is over-generalised—in-sufficiently specific: and in form they have held aloof from the experimentalism of the age. In other words, both in manner and matter, they have taken far more than they have given: it is always the opposite case with genius. They have taken their talents too easily, evading the test of *le bloc resistant*. Perhaps this is because poetry has been rather a recreation to each of them, preoccupied with "more serious matters"! At any rate they have been both so sporadic in their "attack" that I feel that all that either of them has lacked to become a really great poet has been that continuity of impulse which is only to be had when a man makes poetry the main business of his life—as all the great poets have done. Both Dr Macfie and Sir Ronald Ross have served at least two masters throughout.

A writer in the *Glasgow Herald* summarising Mr I. A. Richard's most important essay, "A Background for Contemporary Poetry," which appeared in the *Criterion*, said, "Since the Sixteenth Century what Mr Richard's calls the 'magical view' of the world has been gradually giving place to the scientific. Nature, that is to say, has been neutralised. It is indifferent to us. In contemporary British poetry, therefore, we ought to learn how we are taking this momentous change in the world-view. Mr Hardy, Mr Richards thinks, is the only living British poet who refuses to be comforted by beliefs that derive from the dying (but still strong) magical view of nature. (The magical view, by the way, implies the immanence of a controlling spirit or spirits in nature congenial to the emotional needs of man). Mr Hardy

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has achieved a 'self-reliant and immitigable acceptance' of an indifferent universe. The other major poets of the age—Mr Yeats, Mr de la Mare and Mr D. H. Lawrence—have all fled from the necessity of accepting the world-view of science, and have taken refuge in fabricated emotional universes of their own: Mr Yeats, first in folk-lore and latterly in the visions of the Hermetist; Mr de la Mare in a world of pure phantasy for which the distinction between knowledge and feeling has not yet dawned; and Mr Lawrence in a world of the 'Golden Bough'—that is, in the primitive mentality of people like the Bushmen. Mr Richards thinks that poets will have to face the issue in bolder fashion, and, that the first result of that endeavour will be a poetry of nausea. Mr T. S. Elliot, Miss Moore, and some French and German poets have already voiced the feelings aroused by the sense of a world in ruins." I substantially agree with Mr Richard—but Sir Ronald Ross in Harley Street can scarcely be expected to do so, and, as I have already said, Dr Macfie is a populariser. Sir Ronald's pamphlet, "Science and Poetry" deals with no such issues: and in their poetry if he and Dr Macfie have been affected at all by the force that has sent their greater contemporaries into the ends of the earth, both of them have solved the problem to their own satisfaction, not by any attempt, such as might legitimately have been expected of poets and scientists, to introduce Euterpe to the new world-view that science has disclosed, but by burying her head ostrich-fashion in the sands of conventional culture. In other words, both in their attitude to science and to poetry, what is lacking in both these poets is—not mere topicality but the creative principle—the flair for "the unknown," Rimbaud's phrase—the sense of need to be, if not "in advance," at least fully abreast. But considerations such as these do not affect the fact that as practitioners of what is universally regarded as Poetry (and Science) by cultivated people save for the minority given to ultra-modernism, neither of them is one whit more *passeist* in content or technique than the Georgians at all events. Sir Ronald's poetry is "purer" than Dr Macfie's: but the latter has a much bigger body of work of quality and has addressed himself to major forms eschewed by the former who has to a large extent confined himself, like the majority of contemporary poets, to short poems.

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It was well said in an excellent article on Dr Macfie—and a good deal of it applies equally to Sir Ronald—in *The Scottish Nation*, that, “Dr Macfie is perhaps of all modern Scottish poets, the most characteristically Scottish. He does not write in dialect, but dialect—though still a vital means of expression when used by, let us say, Dr Pittendrigh MacGillivray—tends to become more and more a matter of fancy dress. Indeed it often serves to conceal a complete denationalisation of thought. Dr Macfie’s peculiar Scottish quality lies deeper than that. It is rather a habit of mind—a manner of thought which belongs peculiarly to Scotland—though even in Scotland it is found less often than one might expect. It is, after all, in such a habit of mind that the true meaning of nationality lies; this peculiar angle of vision which interprets life in different parts of the world, in slightly different terms, in one way and in no other. When the underlying thought gets blurred the sense of nationality declines also, and there is nothing left to take its place except an ugly cosmopolitanism—dreary and banal as cosmopolitan hotels. Modern journalism and cheap travel are doing their work pretty thoroughly, and I see nothing much on the other side to counter this standardisation (or cinema-sation) of the world. Desperately as a few of us may struggle against and resent it, in spite of ourselves, we are all caught in the same web and no man can change at will the colour which generation and environment has given to his soul. Yet a few remain comparatively untouched. There are some whose nationality is so strongly woven into the very woof and web of their thought that no alien influence could ever more than superficially change them. Of these is Dr Macfie.” Of these, equally, is Sir Ronald Ross. That they should be comparatively unknown—that Scottish Poetry should connote in its generally accepted sense something so unutterably inferior—is the measure of our denationalisation. The same writer in a sentence brings out what I was saying about their unbroken descent from the Old Makars, when she says of Dr Macfie’s work: “He embodies in his work all that is best in Scottish mentality—its integrity, its singleness of thought, its tenderness, and that curious practical quality which would allow a Scotsman to converse with angels in a perfectly

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*matter-of-fact way without losing for one moment the sense of their mystery.*" There could be no better description of one of the most distinctive features of our independent Scottish literary traditions from Dunbar downwards.

And so despite what I have said of the non-contemporaneity of these two poets, there is an element of truth too in another critic's questions respecting one of them: "Is he not sadly out of time with the age? But is he not greatly in time with the ages?" This balance is in favour of both: but to have become great poets—instead of merely the equals of all but a few of their best English contemporaries—they would have required to have been in time with both. But what differentiates them both from the ruck is that, dissent how even an ultra-modern may from their idealogy or their technique, they both have, at their best, within the convention to which they adhere, an uncommon *maestria*, a *viruosity*, of execution and have attempted high things, greatly conceived and greatly wrought.

*Sir Ronald Ross's poems include, "Philosophies," "Psychologies," etc. He contributed to "Northern Numbers" and "The Scottish Chapbook." His novel "The Revcls of Orsera" is an interesting experiment which deserves more attention than it has received.*

*Dr Macfie's books include, "Granite Dust," "New Poems," "Validmar" (a play), "Titanic Ode," "Quatercentenary Ode," "War" (an Ode), "Odes and Other Poems." He has also published Fairy Tales in collaboration with Lady Margaret Sackville.*

Mr Richard's article referred to appeared in the July *Criterion*, 1925.

## CHAPTER TWELVE.

SIR HERBERT MAXWELL, BART. : SIR IAN HAMILTON.

"Sir Herbert Maxwell is now the doyen of Scottish writers," W. S. Crockett wrote recently. "He has given sixty years of a devoted life to public affairs, and at the moment of writing his fellow-Galwegians propose to honour his distinguished services not only as a local magnate, but also as a national asset. Sir Herbert entered the field of authorship somewhat late in life, his first book, 'Studies in the Topography of Galloway,' having been published when he was forty-two. Since then—from 1887—his pen has not been idle. He has at least half a hundred volumes to his credit in all departments of literary activity. Antiquities, natural history, general history, biography, fiction, have each claimed his attention, and it must be said that he has adorned whatever he has touched. It is, however, as an essayist that Sir Herbert has shone most conspicuously, and he may be remembered in that sphere when much of his other work is forgotten. His 'Memories of the Months' (seven series) are among the finest things he has written—perhaps the best."

Sir Herbert is certainly the oldest living Scottish writer, but *doyen* implies rather more than mere seniority—and age is unfortunately his principal claim to respect. Apart altogether from the younger writers to whose existence only an exceedingly limited circle has yet awakened, there is a considerable group of Scottish writers who take precedence of Sir Herbert in every other way—some of them so much so that it conveys an entirely false impression to term him the "*doyen* of Scottish letters," as if he



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were *primus inter pares*. Mr Crockett's remarks are typical of the slovenliness alike in expression and in thought which are so characteristic of Scots of his generation. What is the use of claiming that Sir Herbert has adorned every section of literature he has touched? What has he added to the art of the novel? Has he made any distinctive contribution to the art of biography? Is it not true that he has been a comparatively undistinguished worker in these and other fields, and that his long tale of books has only what interest attaches to their subject-matter—not to their form and manner? It is nonsense to aver that he has shone as an essayist. The essay in Scotland has indeed come to a bad pass if we have only Sir Herbert to set against Chesterton, Belloc, and a dozen others in England, to go no further afield. Fortunately, we have Cunninghame-Graham, Buchan, and one or two more to mitigate our radical inferiority. Sir Herbert Maxwell is not an essayist—if the word essay means more than an article in prose, a definition which may mean anything or nothing. It would be better to say—not that he is the *doyen* of Scottish letters—but that, for the comparatively small section of our people who are cognisant of his work at all and attach the slightest importance to it (a class constituted mainly of those who share in some degree his antiquarian and other subsidiary prepossessions) he is a "Grand Old Man." And in this connection, Professor Saurat has recently written: "*Contrairement à nous (the French), les Anglais (who include the Scots) ont plutôt des habitudes que des institutions. Ainsi, leur institution de poète lauréat ne persiste guère qu'à l'état squelettique. Il y a un poète lauréat; on sait son nom! Il est peut-être le meilleur des poètes mais, dès qu'il est nommé poète lauréat, tout le monde prend à son égard un ton de commisération et presque de mépris. Pour la partie vivante du monde littéraire il devient anathème. Il aurait beau être aussi avancé que les plus futuristes, il est automatiquement transformé en bourgeois désuet. Par contre les Anglais sont en train de prendre l'habitude d'avoir un (grand old man), un grand vieillard des lettres, que se transforme en idole nationale. On l'adorait. . . . Il mourut. On l'oublia. Le prestige du (grand old man), c'est d'être vivant. Quand il meurt, comme pour les rois de Frazer, son pouvoir passe à un autre.*" A national idol

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in the more genial air of England, but in the dowier atmosphere of Scotland an old man of the sea!

I can imagine no more conclusive give-away of our cultural pretensions than his "The Making of Scotland." It consists of a set of lectures on the War of Independence delivered in the University of Glasgow in 1910. It is actually a concise rehash of the salient features of the period as conceived by orthodox historiography: and inferior in its organisation and presentation of facts to any higher-grade school history book I know. It is a mere stereotype: the trail of the rubber-stamp is over it everywhere. It says little for the quality of Scottish study to-day that the imprimatur of the University of Glasgow should be given to hack-work of this kind. Scottish history has suffered deplorably from the parochialism of its exponents: few of them have been able to rise to the stature of their subject. It is another evidence of the extent of our denationalisation that the history of our country should have become so largely a preserve of the mediocre. After all, there is no history but contemporary history: and the poverty of our historians is the measure of the small extent to which "Scotland—A Nation" prevails in current thought. The true criterion of history is its power of making history—a faculty of which Sir Herbert Maxwell's work is wholly destitute. To treat our national history as he and his like have done is to confirm and accentuate the provincialisation of Scotland. The dreary cast of "local history" is over their work. Not that Sir Herbert is by any means the worst of his type. Although he is an amateur historian he has a cultural equipment in some directions as ample as that of the majority of professional historians: and, by way of compensation, is even more academic than many of them, qualifying his amateurishness (which, frankly exhibited, might have stood him in better stead) with the worst faults of academicism. Here and there one sees him divided between consciousness of his intellectual duties and the duties imposed upon him by his traditions: but for the most part the latter monopolise his services. Scottish history as a department of national activity or art is as far behind that of any other European country as one would expect in view of Scotland's subordinate position.

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Sir Herbert Maxwell has done nothing to make up the leeway: and, in my opinion, it can only be done as a definite contribution towards the recovery of Scottish independence in the fullest sense of the term. So long as Scotland remains subordinate to England, Scottish history will remain subordinate to English. There has lately been a welcome extension of the teaching (albeit insidiously Anglicised) of Scottish history in our schools, evidence of the rising tide of nationalism again, but it still occupies an altogether inferior position in our curricula to the teaching of English history. Surely it is grossly anomalous that the history and literature of a foreign country should be thus given priority over our own—a priority which is largely responsible for the desuetude of Scottish literature and history, the poor quality of our attention to affairs, and our muddled and mediocre response to the arts. "Each nation must be conscious of its mission," says Tagore. "There are lessons which impart information or train our minds for intellectual pursuits. These are simple, and can be acquired and used with advantage. But there are others which affect our deeper nature and change our direction of life. Before we accept them and pay their value by selling our own inheritance, we must pause and think deeply." Scotland has paused on the verge of this surrender. Complete assimilation to England seemed a few years ago only the matter of a very little time—now a halt has been called. An effort is being made to determine what we would lose and what we would gain. Sir Herbert Maxwell and his school have done nothing to help us to answer these questions. The issue will be decided one way or the other without them: that is the extent to which Sir Herbert is a "national asset." Nothing that he has written throws the light we require on the consequences of selling our national inheritance. He himself indeed asks: "What more effective equipment can be had for dealing with human circumstance than an accurate knowledge of the events and individuals by whose agency the world and its separate nationalities have been evolved out of primitive and vigorous conditions and moulded into their present form and relations?" and he proceeds to quote

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead  
Who never to himself has said—  
This is my own, my native land."

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But to what effect? In "The Making of Scotland" he assembles certain facts and names certain names in exactly the same way as similar historians in other countries might use other facts and other names—but he says nothing to show how Scotland became Scotland. The facts are lifted out of their vital context; the names are not used to conjure up living figures. He tells us that this is how Scotland was made—but he does not show us that Scotland and no other country was the inevitable consequence of the circumstances he describes, nor does he tell us what Scotland is. He deals, in other words, with only that fraction of the stream of occurrence which is usually diverted to turn the wheels of the academic mills, while the vast flow remaining rushes past unused. He has nothing to say of Scottish psychology, of Scottish arts and letters, little of industry, or climate, or the consequences of mere geographic position. And he sedulously avoids the deeper issues of nationalism. In other words, the essential background to any study entitled to call itself "The Making of Scotland" is wanting, and, lacking it, the course of events described is a singularly dispurposed and meaningless procession. This, indeed, is the fundamental fault which vitiates all Sir Herbert's work—as it vitiates practically all Scottish history—essential meaninglessness, the lack of purpose in all but the most myopic sense, the absence of any sense of destiny, an incompetence to deal with the issues without which the formal facts and acts are fortuitous and imponderable. His work lacks national consequence and validity, because he brings to it an anaemic and superficial conception of history and of nationality. He is alike deficient in synthesis and analysis, and inhabits a Tom Tiddler's Ground between the two. There is nothing definitive about his work: and inadequacy of intention and poverty of treatment relegate it to a category far below that of the art of history.

A lack of imagination—and of humour—is at the root of his creative impotence. Witness his claim in the introduction to "The Making of Scotland"—"The narrative has been told and retold very often, varying in accordance with the prepossession, prejudice, and historical insight of different writers; yet it remains a fact that, while many Scotsmen desire to have a definite understanding of the

cause for which their forefathers made such heavy sacrifice, few can give the time necessary for the examination and collation of conflicting authorities. I have attempted, therefore, to put the essence of the matter into these lectures . . .” If Sir Herbert Maxwell had had the power to correct the deficiencies of all his predecessors in the way he insinuates, he would indeed have rendered a great service to his countrymen, and to world-history in general, but, in the light of the result, this over-confidence in himself is seen as a natural consequence of his amateurish attitude to his theme. He had at least, however impartial he was otherwise, a prejudice in favour of himself which the present writer does not share in the slightest degree.

Structurally even “The Making of Scotland” is a slipshod indeterminate thing—reflecting in its form, or lack of form, its author’s lack of *nous*, of *savoir faire*. It is full of loose ends: and, as both Dr Hay Fleming and Mr Crockett have pointed out, erroneous in detail. This want of artistry afflicts all Sir Herbert’s books: and is attributable to the inadequacy of the spirit in which he undertook the writing of them: the dilettante attitude—the too-easy assumption that he was equal to the tasks he set himself. The little sketch of the gable-ends in Karl Kapêk’s “Letters from England”—to say nothing of the letterpress, a paragraph or two which sums it all up in the most remarkable fashion—tells far more about Edinburgh than the whole of Sir Herbert’s “Edinburgh: An Historical Study.” The fact of the matter is that from false conceptions of the various kinds of literature he has attempted or from a lack of the necessary industry to *master* his themes, or from the negligence of self-conceit—or a combination of all three—he has failed to raise anything he has tackled into its potential art-form even in the lowest degree. His work remains a species of journalism, with practically no affinity to literature—produced, indeed, by the very antitheses of the processes by which literature is produced. His work in forms dependent upon personality suffers from his temperamental dryness and colourlessness and for the rest “antiquarianism for antiquarianism’s sake” pretty well defines his achievement. In the latter respect he is the best of a type which Scotland during the past fifty years and more has produced in abundance—fungoid phenomena. As a

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naturalist compare his work with W. H. Hudson's or E. L. Grant Watson's or, to take a very different type, the late W. P. Barbellion's. The difference is between literature as represented by these three and the old stupid sentimental unimaginative approach to Nature typified in "Nature Notes" to the *Scotsman*, or, with a supersterility, in the unreadable work of Seton Gordon: this *wrong* attitude to Nature, and manner of writing about it, is simply to be found in a slightly more tolerable form in Sir Herbert than in the majority of Scottish naturalists. Sir Herbert has had no influence on contemporary Scotland outwith a small class whose social and material conditions predisposed them to likemindedness to himself, but to whom the whole of the remainder of the population are essentially impermeable. That is to say, he counts for nothing really—and I cannot see the slightest reason for imagining with Mr Crockett that he is likely to be remembered for his work in the sphere of the essay any more than for his work in other spheres. If he is, he can only in the nature of things have what Borrow called a "very short immortality."

Sir Ian Hamilton is in rather better case—his comparative ineffectuality (as an artist) being due to the opposite causes to Sir Herbert's for the most part, although his attitude to the concept of "Scotland—A Nation" is sufficiently similar to give in itself one fundamental reason for the vitiation of his gifts, his failure to employ them dynamically. Sir Ian, however, is not deficient in imagination, nor, altogether, in sense of style. His despatches from the Dardanelles were models of their kind—far and away superior to those of any of our other Generals, and, for the matter of that, to the communications of most special correspondents. He has a brilliant aliveness—a wide knowledge of, and interest in, affairs—almost an ubiquity. But that a man so brilliantly endowed, so advantageously circumstanced, should have become largely a voice crying in the wilderness argues an essential defect at the very basis of his diverse powers—a disorganisation of his personal force that can only be attributable to an infirmity of the will, a moral impotence. In my opinion, this is due to the fact that his tendencies, his criticisms, begin too late—after a too-great acceptance



of "things as they are." He does not dig down far enough. Dynamite that should have been devoted to blasting operations is utilised for mere pyrotechnics. He swallows camels—and strains at gnats. His conclusions are frequently right—brilliantly right in comparison with those of the majority of his contemporaries in this country—but his premises are utterly wrong and render his conclusions no matter how brilliant they are pointless and nugatory. His heart is in the right place: but his head only hovers round it. In other words, he has an effective imagination, but lacks logic—he is creative but not constructive. Kitchener detested him and used to refer to him as "that b——y poet." It is easy to understand this. There could be no catalysis between Kitchener's junker spirit and Sir Ian's gallant embodiment of the finest elements of the Scottish military tradition. The war may have been for the British War Office a war to save civilisation—Sir Ian was one of the very few of our military leaders who had that civilisation himself in a degree worth saving. Practically all the others had fourth-rate minds: and came to occupy the positions they did by virtue mainly of their limitations. Sir Ian is a poet—one of the contributors to *Northern Numbers* (an indication of his interest in, and identification of himself with, Scottish letters as such, and the conception of Scottish nationality behind its recent developments, just as his campaign on behalf of the Caledonian Canal showed his nationalistic attitude to affairs)—but his poetry suffers like his practical influence from lack of "significant form": he has the materials of poetry—but lacks effective technique—just as he has a lively sense of affairs, but no dynamic powers. Here again he has failed mainly from an inability to dig into himself deeply enough—he has accepted the traditions of his caste too fully, despite the differentia of his vivid and restless personality, and the traditions of his caste do not permit more than a nodding acquaintance with the art of letters. And as to Scottish affairs, the traditions of his caste do not permit an undue preoccupation with these—an occasional point, perhaps, just sufficient to differentiate a Scottish member of it from an English member of it: but no going thoroughly into the matter—as if it were really of fundamental importance: that would be "bad form"; Sir Ian came pretty near that



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over the Caledonian Canal scheme—he felt ridiculously strongly on the question. Happily nothing happened; the matter has now died down—largely, I believe, because of Sir Ian's failure to realise that the opposition to the scheme was related to the question of the whole relative position of Scotland to England to-day. Sir Ian's propaganda was not the Fiery Cross; it was only fireworks. But they were certainly very pretty while they lasted.

But compare Sir Ian's publicism with the stock-stuff of the Anglo-Scottish Press. Writing of Russia (in "The Friends of England") he has the unusual courage to say: "We also are under a propaganda spell; the propaganda of capitalists who are really afraid the Bolsheviks' propaganda will penetrate and smash theirs if the two forces come into contact. Is not that rather timid? Is not that the defensive attitude which invariably is defeated in the end? If, as I believe, we are right from the point of view of humanity; if our capitalist system is on the whole sound and capable of readjustment where it is unsound, we ought not to be so frightened; we ought to establish as close relations with the dupes of the Bolsheviks as the Soviet will allow, and let them see with their own eyes what's what. But we don't. We seize on any old excuse to keep them at arm's length. Even now we are barely on speaking terms. Why? Because they execute bishops? That would be absurd. We've done a bit in that line ourselves; our own Queen Mary burnt off four live bishops and fifteen priests in one year. The crowds which assembled to witness those bonfires were quite a hundred years ahead of the Moujiks who patronise the new martyrdoms. That is not the reason then. We get nearer to it if we say it is because the Russian Government must first formally admit her debts. We want the Communist system to acknowledge the capitalist system. A very happy thought, but we should stand on firmer ground if the Capitalistic States paid their own debts to one another. Those Bolshies won't admit the debt and won't pay; the French do admit their debt and won't pay; so 'Hats off to France!'" The whole book is full of such pieces of brilliant commonsense and freedom from conventional clap-trap; but it "cuts no ice" politically. Why not? Why, despite all his experience, his clear view

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of world-affairs, his brilliant—if a bit slap-dash—style, is Sir Ian practically destitute of political influence, exercising less influence than any parrot of an anonymous leader-writer the mere divulgence of whose identity would show that he was incompetent to deal with the matters on which he presumed to speak, from lack of first-hand knowledge of the facts, inexperience in affairs, provincialism of outlook, and defective education? Simply because the strength of his convictions has not been sufficient to override the traditions of his caste—to compel him to effective action, and, as a first step, to force him to re-examine his whole position *de novo*. His pre-conceived ideas prevent the effective—i.e., the dynamic, the influencing—presentation of what he has observed and felt. Had he not thus occupied an untenable position himself—had he let himself go wherever not the assumed but the tested truth led him—he might have been a tremendous force in contemporary world-politics. And the majority of our orthodox politicians would certainly have detested the politician as Kitchener detested the poet—and for the same reasons. Unfortunately he has kept himself as soldier—as politician—and as literary artist, in different compartments, and in so doing restricted his power in each of these capacities to no more than a third of that which was potential.

Sir Ian's analyses of the personalities of Lenin, Trotsky, Chicherin, Litvinoff, and Lunacharsky compare only—so far as any writer in English is concerned—to Frank Harris's; a significant fact. Posterity will give Sir Ian credit for a penetration immune to propaganda—a sufficiently unusual distinction; and for a sportsmanly fairness sadly to seek—in such connections at any rate—in Great Britain to-day. A fairer and more humanly sensible statement of the case for the Russian leaders has not appeared anywhere else outside the fourth volume of Harris's "Contemporaries." And in all his other chapters—as he traverses Germany, France, America, Italy, Bulgaria, Poland, and so on—he has something vivid and vital, just and helpful, to say. But it is when he comes to the big principles that underlie the facts and figures—the world movements, the conflicting theories—that he is at a loss. His work remains journalism, not literature, for this reason: and for the same reason he remains a personality rather than a power.

But the diversity of Scottish temperament and tendency

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to-day, even in the restricted class to which these two belong, could not be better illustrated than by thus juxtaposing Sir Herbert and Sir Ian. They typify the two stools between which Scotland has fallen so deeply.

*Sir Herbert Maxwell's books include Passages in the life of Sir Lucian Elphin; A Novel, 1889; The Letter of the Law: A Novel, 1890; Meridiana, Noontide Essays, 1892; Post-Meridiana Afternoon Essays, 1895; Scottish Land Names, 1894; History of Dumfriesshire and Galloway, 1896; Bruce and the Struggle for Scottish Independence, 1897; The Making of Scotland, 1911; Trees, a Woodland Note Book, 1914; Edinburgh, an Historical Study, 1916.*

*Sir Ian Hamilton's books include The Friends of England, 1923; Staff Officer's Scrap Book.*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

EDWIN MUIR.

Comparing Sir George Douglas and George Brandes, I questioned whether Sir George might not have achieved more, if he had had a different conception of the critic's function—"a conception," I said, "that it is to be hoped some Scottish critic in however small a measure will soon begin to show." But as a matter of fact we have that already in Edwin Muir—a critic incontestably in the first flight of contemporary critics of *welt-literatur*. He differs from Brandes and from the Brandes-like critic I desiderated for Scotland, however, in that he has not yet become effective in his own country. That will come. Muir is still a young man: and the problems that have to be solved before a Scottish Renaissance can be got thoroughly under-weigh have already been engaging his attention. His interest lies there: but the movement has not yet reached the point at which it can give him a sufficient—and sufficiently suitable—audience to make it worth his while (I do not mean merely financially—though the matter of *modus vivendi* is involved) to devote himself either wholly or in large measure to it. Muir's critical apparatus is not designed for the spade-work that has yet to be done. Infants cannot profitably be sent direct to the Universities: and, relatively speaking, interest in literature in Scotland is infantile, while Muir is a Pan-European intervening in the world-debate on its highest plane. The number of readers in Scotland capable of following his arguments is extremely limited—proportionately to population much smaller than in any other country in Europe,

or in the United States: as is indicated by the fact that it is only within the last two or three years that his name has become known to any extent at all in what may be called our uppermost class of readers, whereas his outstanding ability has long been recognised in London, he is known in Germany as the translator of Gerhardt Hauptmann and as a thoroughly qualified international interpreter of German literature, he has a big following in America, where he has contributed a great deal to most of the leading literary periodicals. A prominent French critic writing on the Scottish Renaissance and remarking on Muir's connection with the movement, is careful to add *nota bene* after his name, as if that in itself were a sufficient guarantee—as it is—that, however unknown the names of the other prime movers in this “News from the North” may be, “there is something in it.” And so forth. In short, he has already the makings of a world-reputation, which he is rapidly consolidating. His name is to be encountered everywhere—in *The Nation and Athenaeum* almost every week, in *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, in *The Adelphi*, in *The Saturday Westminster Gazette*, in *The North American Review*, in *The Dial*, in *The New York Nation*. And always over distinctive work—work that, however diverse in its point of departure, is obviously making irresistibly for that common rendezvous where ultimately it will be found to be assembled as a four-square body of criticism challenging comparison with the best of its kind produced by any contemporary—and by all but two or three forerunners—in the English language. Since the collapse of *The Scottish Nation* and *The Northern Review*—to both of which he contributed—Scotland has ceased to offer any suitable medium for his work. There is nothing for him in Scotland—and not until Scotland can maintain at least one organ that can house such work can such a writer as Muir devote himself even partially to the exploration of these problems upon the successful solution of which the re-emergence of Scotland into international letters depends—devote himself, that is to say, in such a fashion as might be most speedily successful in producing an effective movement and guiding it in the best way, functions he is exceptionally qualified to exercise. In another sense, of course—in his own creative work—he must be to a great extent continuously occupied with these problems: and, indirectly,

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his guidance lies to be found in everything he writes—by those trained, or qualified, to detect it. But it is implicit, not explicit. It is available for an infinitely smaller number of Scots than it might otherwise be, if Scotland could place adequate media at his disposal. And I am not sure that the extent to which the present organisation of British literary journalism compels him to be an English critic rather than a Scottish critic in international appreciation is not inhibiting him to some extent creatively as well as critically (terms that are to some extent, but not wholly, interchangeable). It is significant, at all events, that he “found himself” most convincingly as a poet not in his work in English, but in his Braid Scots ballads: and in my opinion he would have done better work still if he had not contented himself with conventional ballad Scots, but had employed a full Braid Scots canon of his own devising based upon a *de novo* consideration of the entire resources of the language on the one hand, and its tractability to the most significant processes and purposes of ultra-modern literature on the other. However that may be, it is deplorable that when for the first time in its history Scotland produces a literary critic of the first rank it has no organ to offer him in which he may express himself, and a reading public of which only an infinitesimal portion can follow, or profit by, what he writes, so that he is compelled to devote himself to English or American periodicals where his subject-matter seldom has reference to Scottish interests, and in which he is practically debarred from a creative Scots propaganda of ideas. Nor can he even live in Scotland. The cultural facilities it offers are comparatively beneath contempt. The ordinary amenities of civilised intercourse are almost entirely to seek. Muir can meet his intellectual equals in London, in Paris, in Salzburg, and Italy—but there are probably not a score of people between John o’ Groats and Maidenkirke who do not stand culturally to him in the relation of the veriest country-cousins. The atmosphere of the country would rapidly ruin the wonderful critical apparatus he has succeeded in perfecting during the years since he fled from Glasgow, and, in turn, from London, to breathe the *plein air* of the Continent.

But it is part and parcel of the whole theory of the Scottish Renaissance that any sufficiently well-equipped “watcher of the skies,” surveying the field of European

letters, was bound a year or two ago to prophesy that something of the kind was due to show signs of emergence. I have myself pointed out elsewhere that it is in accordance, for example, with the theories Oswald Spengler expounds in his "Downfall of the Western World"—and along these lines I have been driven to see a potentially-creative interrelationship between such ostensibly unrelated phenomena as the emergence of the "Glasgow Group" of Socialist M.P.'s; the intensification of the Scottish Home Rule movement; the growth of Scottish Catholicism; and the movement for the revival of Braid Scots. As soon as I began to interest myself in the possibilities of a Scottish Renaissance I found that I was by no means alone in doing so. The matter was definitely "in the air." Individual Scots here and there in Scotland itself, in England, and in all sorts of places abroad, suddenly manifested themselves to me as being engaged simultaneously in the same process. Muir was one of these. He and his wife, and A. S. Neill and others, had, I found, been engaged in debating the self-same issues with each other in Italy, Austria, and elsewhere, before they heard of *Northern Numbers* and *The Scottish Chapbook*, and learned that there was a movement on foot in Scotland itself. A sporadic simultaneity of speculation of this kind is, as every student of literary history knows, a highly significant—if not infallible—phenomenon. In Muir's case it has already led to his remarkable essays on Burns, the Scottish Ballads, and George Douglas Brown, and to his own Scots Ballads. But there was something even more significant than this simultaneity of tendency to me—and that was the astonishing calibre younger Scots were beginning to manifest in every department of art. Take three of them. In literary criticism—Muir, incomparably the finest critic Scotland has ever produced, and the only one who has achieved an international reputation and influence. In music—F. G. Scott, the only Scottish composer of international calibre in the whole of our history; and in art—William M'Cance, a profound critic and creative theorist, and a brilliant artist of the latest school. The two last-named I shall deal with subsequently. The point here is that all of them—in their knowledge of their arts—have a European range. They are European in their experience of life. They are thoroughly "founded" and intellectually abreast of all that is going on in world.



art and world-affairs. They have been successively struck with the potentialities of a Scottish Renaissance. There is surely more than mere coincidence in this. Their emergence after the almost complete provincialisation of Scotland is a striking and salutary phenomenon. And the completely national character of the underground movement that is now throwing up such significant figures cannot be better illustrated than by the fact that Muir comes from Orkney, Scott from the Borders, and M'Cance from Glasgow. This showed that the diathesis of renaissance was nation-wide. Each of the trio named were "left-wing men," too—aligned with the "becoming" tendencies in world-culture. They had each by one means or another succeeded in relieving themselves of the inhibitions that have so long made the Scottish approach to art so intolerably flat-footed, heavy-handed, and generally *gauche* and ungainly. In other words, they were capable—as soon as they felt it necessary to their own artistic development—of viewing Scottish cultural requirements—the pre-requisites of any Scottish Renaissance worthy of the name—from an adequate standpoint: and of applying to the task of reintroducing Scots art into the European stream a full knowledge of the relative contemporary position of the Arts in other countries, and of employing all the available technical resources. They could come in on the "ground floor." The main thing is that all three have become—after becoming thoroughly "good Europeans" so far as their several arts and their general cultural equipment is concerned—conscious Scots: and have thus resolved—potentially at any rate—the basic difficulties which, unresolved in the past, have made the work of practically all Scottish writers "ill-founded" and comparatively impure, and when written in English, irrelevant to the main English tradition. In exploring and exploiting their artistic potentialities—the basic constitution of any work they can do—they have to reckon consciously with the fact that they are Scots, not English, and with the variant limitations and opportunities that fact carries with it. One of the main preliminary aims of the Scottish Renaissance movement, therefore, must be to bring every other Scottish writer of any consequence to a like conscious confrontation of the fact that he is Scottish and that his work cannot be proceeding along the lines calculated to enable him to express himself and realise his

artistic potentialities most fully unless it offers an unmistakable practical equivalent—in content if not also in form and language—of the difference in psychology and cultural background between any Scot and any Englishman. And, while inducing that realisation and enjoining that first practical step, the movement must go further and make it clear that this difference due to being Scottish is not—as it has been generally (but not perhaps consciously) treated in the past—a handicap to be got rid of by deliberate assimilation to English standards, but the primary ground for hope—the outstanding opportunity that presents itself to them. While Muir has not systematically applied himself to the elucidation of these issues, he has—as it were by accident, in the course of other work—illuminated some of them in no uncertain fashion. Such work of this kind as he has already done makes it all the more regrettable that our press is so Anglicised, and so debased, that it has little room for literary matter for the most part—beyond the most flagrant publishers' puffs—and that, even so far as that little is concerned, London fashions in opinion are slavishly copied by reviewers and special article writers whose anonymity would only require to be withdrawn to reveal their incapacity for literary journalism in any responsible sense of the term a little more completely even—if that is possible—than the text of their articles and reviews already does.

Since I have myself been a literary critic of *The New Age* I must let another speak of its peculiar merits. Gerald Cumberland says of it (at the time of A. R. Orage's editorship): "Tens of thousands of people have been influenced by this paper who have never even heard its name. It does not educate the masses directly: it reaches them through the medium of its few but exceedingly able readers. *The New Age* is professedly a Socialist organ, but the promulgation of socialistic doctrines is only a part of its policy and work. Its literary, artistic, and musical criticism is the sanest, the bravest, and the most brilliant that can be read in England. It reverences neither power nor reputation; it is subtle and unsparing; and, if it is sometimes cruel, it is cruel with a purpose. All sleek money-makers in Art have reason to fear Orage . . . I have never known an editor more jealous of the reputation of his paper than Orage is of *The New Age*. No

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consideration of friendship would induce him to print a dull article, however sound, and when one of his contributors becomes sententious, or slack, or banal—out he goes, neck or crop." Now, Muir was on the staff of *The New Age* under Orage's editorship—and continued to contribute to it until comparatively recently, some considerable time after Orage ceased to edit it. Cumberland's tribute to *The New Age* will be endorsed by any writer or reader of intellectual integrity: and the fact that Muir was a regular contributor to it during Orage's time shows that he qualified for—and completed his training in—the hardest school for critics Great Britain has ever had to offer. Compare the standards of *The New Age* with those of any existing Scottish periodical. The former set a level and was inspired by principles illimitably higher than even the best of the latter—which is to say, the *Glasgow Herald*—has achieved. This is the measure of our journalistic decadence: and the crux of one of the problems of the Scottish Renaissance. Young Scottish literary aspirants are too apt to plume themselves enormously upon achieving the acceptance of an article or a poem by the *Glasgow Herald*: but the level of work acceptable by the best existing Scottish periodicals must be beneath contempt from the point of view of a Scottish Renaissance. If the former is the pitch of a writer's ambition he has nothing to offer to any movement of consequence. But if he aims beyond that—where is he to find a medium for his work? The answer is that unless his work conforms to English literary fashions—nowhere in the meantime! A writer in the *London Mercury* recently took me to task for asserting that English literary periodicals discriminate against Scottish work. I, of course, never asserted anything of the kind. What I do assert is that if Scottish creative impulses tend—as all but the most minor ones must—to develop in forms incompatible with established literary fashions, there is no medium in Great Britain to print them. This is tantamount to an embargo on distinctively Scottish productivity. And the boycott is completed by the fact that, while this is the state of affairs appertaining to the literary journalism centred in London, the Scottish press itself has so far degenerated that it will only accept work so written as to have a mob-appeal—i.e., both in subject-matter and treatment beneath contempt from a purely literary standpoint. Good Scots

work—comparable to the best contemporary English work—falls between these two stools. England has quite a number of periodicals open to experimental work—the excellent *Criterion*, the *Calendar of Modern Letters*, the *Adelphi*, not to mention every now and again such ventures as *Blast* or *The Tyro*. These are in addition to the whole range of literary periodicals such as *The New Statesman*, the *Nation and Athenæum*, the *Spectator*, the *Saturday Review* down to the *Bookman* and *T.P.'s Weekly*—all of which are predominantly or at any rate largely concerned with literature, while in all of them Scottish literature is, proportionately to the educated reading publics of the two countries, relegated to almost complete neglect. Even Ireland is better off than Scotland—with the splendid *Irish Statesman*, the scarcely less admirable *Dublin Magazine*, and older organs such as the *Dublin Review* and *Studies*. All of these are on a plane far beyond anything yet devoted to Scottish Arts. Apart from nationalism altogether, compare the leading daily papers of Holland with ours in Scotland. The former devote two or three columns each week to German, French, and English (British) literature respectively—not silly reviews that might be written by their office-boys, but substantial criticisms, by competent writers belonging to the nations in question. Imagine the *Scotsman* doing anything of the kind! Are we so far behind the Dutch, then? Or is it the policy of our papers that is wrong—are they grossly misconceiving the duties of representative journals? They will say that the number of Scots interested in foreign literatures is infinitesimal—not worth catering for—compared with those interested in, say, whippet-racing. Quite. But who is responsible for that? What becomes of the power of the Press? Can the Press not elevate public taste? The answer lies mainly in the personnel of our contemporary newspaper proprietors and editorial staffs. There were not so very long ago sound if not great journalists in Scotland. Scarcely a Scottish paper has not deteriorated greatly during the past twenty-five years. More recently there has been a regrettable increase of control over the Scottish Press by English combines. The present degeneracy of the Scottish Press is a natural concomitant of the accelerated assimilation to English standards with its resultant provincialisation of Scotland. Both countries suffer in various ways: but Scotland suffers most—and

by far most obviously. Compare Glasgow and Manchester: and then compare the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Manchester Guardian*—the latter with such men as (and I do not overvalue any of them) Allan Monkhouse, C. E. Montague, Professor C. H. Herford, J. E. Agate, and so on, while the former has—William Power, Robert Bain; but who else? Nobody. Literally nobody. And then, as Cumberland boasts, Manchester has its younger men “who formed the Manchester Musical Society, who wrote plays, who organised the little Swan Club which worked with such extraordinary pertinacity and secrecy to create an ampler intellectual life”—men like Iden Payne, Stanley Houghton, Harold Brighouse, Jack Kahane, Lascelles Abercrombie, W. P. Price-Heywood, Ernest Marriott, G. H. Mair. Who are Glasgow’s young men—and women? There are none. . . . For the credit of Scotland it is high time that Glasgow put itself in a position to be able to offer sufficient inducements to retain in it, or regularly attached to its Press and social life at all events, men like Muir and M’Cance, both of whom have fled it in horror and despair like Karl Capêk’s; and set about creating an atmosphere in which, as in Manchester, young men and women could cultivate their intelligences and dream their dreams. This much must be said for Glasgow. It is the only city in Scotland where there is the slightest possibility of that ever happening to all appearances. Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen are beyond hope.

Muir has now three volumes to his credit—“We Moderns” (published under the pseudonym of Edward Moore), “Latitudes” (published by Huebsch in America and Melrose here)—a volume of critical and philosophical studies—and “First Poems” (Hogarth Press). No young Scot should fail to read all three—and everything else Muir writes. His recent essays on the Sitwells, Joyce, Lawrence, and Lytton Strachey will probably be published soon: and, as I write, the Hogarth Press announce his “Chorus of the Newly Dead,” one of the most remarkable poems written in English for many years. I believe he is also engaged upon a novel of Glasgow life — designed to serve as a dynamic counter-foil to George Blake’s work and the other novels of the so-called young “Glasgow School.” “Inspiration is not peculiar to the artist,” says Croce. “It comes to all of us, whatever our walk in life. And it is

not a substitute for will, but depends on will. It is a sort of grace from on high that descends upon those who allure it, inviting it by daily effort, preparing themselves to welcome it, and sustaining it, when it has come, by new efforts." It is Muir's *will* that has lifted him out of our Scottish provincialism and is making him an international force. My complaint is that there exists a condition of affairs that makes it excessively difficult, if not impossible, for any conscious artist to apply his will-power in distinctively Scottish directions to-day: the Scottish Renaissance movement is out to remove that barrier and to make it no longer necessary to work through English or other media with the loss of force that involves in order to influence Scotland and to create Scots Art. "The Unconscious within us, which 'doeth the work,' is quite unyielding," says another writer, "in its insistence on being equipped with a perfect intellectual technique. If it is baffled by clumsy thought, insular vision, and unpractised craft, it is likely to give up in disgust the effort of expression, and the poor individual who might have been the vehicle of that revelation is torn by the agony of frustration." The majority of Scottish writers during the past hundred years have been entirely destitute of intellectual equipment adequate to work of international calibre, or even of national calibre comparatively considered. Scotland has consequently become insular and has "fidded fu' fain" on the strength of work that reflected only its national degeneracy and its intellectual inferiority to every other European country. The majority of the Scottish writers held most in esteem by contemporary Scots were (or are) too "unconscious" even to experience the sense of frustration. They were too completely destitute of artistic integrity. It is in this that Muir is so significantly differentiated from the great majority, if not all, of his predecessors back to the time of the Auld Makars—both as critic and creative artist. "Reviewers," says Alan Porter, "think they are to be praised if they read a book casually, react naively, like a child, and spin out a few hundred words of comment, easily and without self-adjustment. Indeed, they are rather proud of their little idiosyncrasies and obsessions. 'At least,' they will tell you, 'we are honest. We put down what we felt as we read. It is one man's testimony, and we do not pretend that it is more.' Honest? They have no conception of



how far a man must dig into himself before he can lay claim to honesty, and is it any better to deck prejudices in pompous words, to attempt to convince readers that a personal opinion is an absolute judgment? No; that is both charlatanism and disrespectfulness. The critic, before he sets down a word, must beat himself on the head and ask a hundred times, each time more bitterly and searchingly, 'And is it true? Is it true?' He must analyse his judgment and make sure that it is nowhere stained or tinted with the blood of his heart. And he must search out a table of values from which he can be certain that he has left nothing unconsidered. If, after all these precautions and torments, he is unable to deliver a true judgment, then fate has been too strong for him: he was never meant to be a critic."

These are the tests Muir applies to himself—and which the reader may apply to his work—and he emerges triumphantly. He is a critic—almost the only one our singularly uncritical nation has ever produced. Compared with him all our reviewers and special article writers and literary historians and lecturers on literary subjects are discovered as hopelessly shallow and dishonest. He has dug down into himself sufficiently far to find honesty—and many other things—so far, indeed, as to rediscover the fact that he is a Scot, and as such vitally differentiated, a fact than which few things are more deeply concealed to and by the vast majority of his countrymen. Once thus rediscovered it is a fact that must be reckoned with. What Muir is going to make of it remains to be seen; but in his Ballads and in certain of his critical essays he has already made a great deal—and a great deal that may be the cause of a great deal more in himself and in others. I cannot conclude better than by quoting the passage in his essay on "The Scottish Ballads," which to anyone who has pride of race and is unwilling to be subordinated to any other people supplies in itself a sufficient *raison d'être* for the Scottish Renaissance movement in general, and the attempt to revive the Scots vernacular in particular:—"Since English became the literary language of Scotland there has been no Scots imaginative writer who has attained greatness in the first or even the second rank through the medium of English. Scott achieved classical prose, prose with the classical qualities of solidity, force, and measure, only when he wrote in the Scottish dialect;



his Scottish dialogue is great prose, and his one essay in Scottish imaginative literature, 'Wandering Willie's Tale' is a masterpiece of prose, of prose which one must go back to the seventeenth century to parallel. The style of Carlyle, on the other hand, was taken bodily from the Scots pulpit; he was a parish minister of genius, and his English was not great English but great Scots English; the most hybrid of all styles, with some of the virtues of the English Bible and many of the vices of the Scottish version of the Psalms of David; a style whose real model may be seen in Scott's anticipatory parody of it in 'Old Mortality.' He took the most difficult qualities of the English language and the worst of the Scots, and through them attained a sort of absurd, patchwork greatness. But —this can be said for him—his style expressed, in spite of its overstrain, and even through it, something real, the struggle of a Scots peasant, born to other habits of speech and of thought, with the English language. Stevenson—and it was the sign of his inferiority, his lack of fundamental merit—never had this struggle, nor realised that it was necessary that he should have it. . . . The other two Scots-English writers of the last half-century, John Davidson and James Thomson (the author of 'The City of Dreadful Night') were greater men than Stevenson, less affected and more fundamental; but fundamental as they were, they lacked something which in English prose is fundamental, and the oblivion into which they are fallen, undeserved as it seems when we consider their great talents, is yet, on some ground not easy to state, just The thing I am examining here, superficial in appearance, goes deep. No writer can write great English who is not born an English writer and in England: and born moreover in some class in which the tradition of English is pure, and, it seems to me, therefore, in some other age than this . . . ."

That is the choice—either to go back to Scots; or to be content to be indefinitely no more than third-rate in an English tradition which is declining, and to the declinature of which no bottom can apparently be set—one of Spengler's "exhausted civilisations" giving way to "the stones the builders despised."

*See also three articles on Muir as critic in "New Age," by the present writer, in May, 1924, and one on Muir, as poet, by Hugh M'Diarmid in "New Age," June, 1925.*

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

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The position of Scottish literature compared with that of any other European country is deplorable enough : but that of Scottish music is infinitely worse. In music as in drama we are unique in the fact that we have practically failed to develop any worth considering at all : and in both cases this is due to substantially the same causes—first of all, the Reformation ; second, the comparative material poverty of our country which has developed that “ eye to the main chance ” which is the salient and too often the sole characteristic of our people ; and, third, our subordination to England. The arts are still to a large extent under Calvinistic suspicion, and this has borne more heavily on music, the drama, and dancing than on literature and art. The vast majority of our people overwhelmed in drudgery are inevitably preoccupied with something very much more get-at-able than music : and frankly unless the present economic system (of which our education and our religion are appurtenances) can be radically altered a really civilised life must remain out of the question so far as the majority of our people are concerned. Music more than any of the other arts demands rigorous intellectual application. Owing to our subordination to England we are cut off from our own “ sources ” ; obliged to think in an alien and unsuitable language ; and denied many of the facilities for self-expression and development that would otherwise have been available. It is impossible to give adequate consideration to the position of the arts in Scotland unless full account is taken of our economic

and political circumstances; and when these have been taken fully into consideration it is not surprising to find those who are most vitally concerned with the absence in Scotland of arts comparable to those of any other country in Europe conjoining to a new propaganda of cultural nationalism a demand for a Scots Free State on the one hand and, on the other, a faith in what is loosely called "Socialism" as the only programme that is likely to give the whole population access to the highest and best things that life can offer.

If the religious and political courses to which we have been committed have not come between us and the realisation of our finest potentialities, it is impossible to account for our comparative sterility. The case in regard to our music is particularly clear and permits of no other conclusion. It may be—although I do not think so—that there is something in Scottish psychology so antipathetic to drama as to account for our failure to develop that form to any extent worthy of a moment's consideration. But in music it is otherwise. Obviously forces have intruded here which have precluded the due development of splendid beginnings. The future of Scottish music depends upon the resolution of the religious and political complexes which have inhibited our natural musical genius. This resolution must be a conscious process—not an event to be attended Micawber-like. What signs are there that any such conscious effort is being made? The answer to that question is the only material of the slightest consequence with which we can address ourselves to any query as to where Scotland stands, so far as music is concerned: everything else is irrelevant, and depends either upon a misconception as to what music is or as to what Scotland is or both. Apart from some entirely preventible and entirely deplorable suspension of natural musical faculty in Scotland, there is no reason why our exploitation of music should not have kept pace with that of any other country in Europe, judging by the volume and quality of Scottish Folk-Song, which is undeniably one of the finest in the world. On this incomparable basis—calculated to sustain an inimitable superstructure—we have built literally nothing. Why? Other countries with poorer bases have magnificent achievements to their credit. We delight in these—but give nothing in return.

That so splendid a tradition—manifestly replete with

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inspiration as soon as the right psychology approaches it with adequate technique—should have proved, and still be proving, so barren in tendency is obviously an issue of such crucial importance from the point of view of the value of creative activity to any people that the apathy towards it, non-recognition of the opportunities so created, and failure to concentrate upon it as the most vital problem of our national being, of all who have claimed or claim to be Scottish musicians is the best proof of either their lack of integrity or their lack of capacity. They have exchanged their birthright for a mess of pottage. The whole of the recent musical history of Europe reproaches their impotence, or their incomprehension. That the latter is mainly responsible must be the conclusion of all who are unable to concede the radical spiritual inferiority of our people to all other Western nations.

The position in Scotland to-day is that we have, on the one hand, the great mass of our population given, owing to their material circumstances, practically no opportunity for acquiring a culture: and, on the other hand, a comparatively small section whose culture is practically little more than a mere inversion of the condition of the masses. This means that so far as music is concerned there has never been any carrying-over from purely folk-expression into an art-product—*i.e.*, expression as art—the process which has built up the musical traditions of every other country. There does not seem to be even yet in Scotland, except in a few isolated quarters, the slightest inkling as to what this process is or the means of initiating it. Even those Scots who are actively interested in musical matters and must necessarily be perfectly familiar with this process at work in the music of other countries—or at least with its results in new art-products—seem incapable of applying it to our Scottish sources or of discerning that its introduction and application is the only way out for Scottish music—the only means whereby it can ever emerge on to a plane comparable to that to which music has long attained in every other country. Scotland is their “blind spot,” as it were: and this is due to their cultural and political preconceptions, suggestions superimposed to the frustration of their natural powers—but it should be at variance with their artistic instincts. That it is not, consciously at all events—and that they should be driven to “compensate” them-

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selves for this radical "want" after the fashion in which an inferiority complex inevitably operates—amounts to a "specific aboulia." On the other hand, it means that Scotland is to-day a country full of unparalleled potentialities—a country, the only country in Europe, in which literally everything remains to be done. Magnificent opportunities await any Scotsman who has the fortune to be free, or can free himself, of the common inhibitions, and pierce with intuitive genius to the core of this tangle. We hear a great deal about the Scots being a musical people. It is difficult to come to grips with what this means. If it had any reality it would make it all the more inexplicable—indeed, it would have made it impossible—that a people possessed of a Folk-Song that has probably no equal in the world and so extremely appreciative of it (the fact to which the loose phrase really refers) should have become so completely disoriented and precluded from the natural exploitation of it. I do not believe that this is due to any inherent incapacity of the Scottish nation even as it now exists, but wholly to political and economic causes which have the incidental effect of inhibiting our natural genius, and that therefore the removal of these is a first essential—or at least a concomitant—of any Scottish National Renaissance worthy of the name.

Whatever the causes may be—fortuitous or fundamental—when we come to examine the state of affairs in regard to music that actually obtains in Scotland to-day, we find that while it is thus taking credit to itself for possessing a highly intelligent and musical people, it simply has so far altogether failed to find any musical expression for itself worth mentioning, and has no existence at all as a musical nation. Scotland has no place in the map of music. Let alone "Scottish music," no Scottish composer finds mention in Landormy's "History of Music," and references to Scotland or to Scotsmen in any other musical history or dictionary of music and musicians are exceedingly few and far between, and of negligible value at that. Scotland's position comparatively to any other European country is adequately represented by a state of affairs which gives the latter an interesting array of names and a record of historical development and the former nothing. "Facts are chieftains that winna ding," and people who "blaw" about Scottish music would be well-

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advised to perpend its relative position. We have certainly no justification for a "guid conceit o' oorsel's" in this connection.

The end of last century saw Scotland putting forth its first attempts to find musical expression. The technique of the time was an easy one. It was not an experimental period. Such men as Mackenzie, Learmont Drysdale, Hamish MacCunn, and J. B. McEwen—two of whom are still living—can only be claimed as Scots composers in the sense that they had acquired a technique that was then common all over the world and applied it to Scottish subjects. In other words, their technique was an imposition from the outside. Their achievement can be summed up by saying that it almost entirely consisted in the application of German teaching to Scottish themes. Their technique could have been just as well applied to an English or an Irish theme. Any English or other foreign composer could have applied the same technique to Scottish themes in exactly the same way as they did. They had no impulse impelling them to create specifically Scottish music—to carry on from our native Folk-Song and derive art-products from it. Scotland musically has had no part whatever in the new nationalism that arising after the decline of the great German classics has in turn affected almost every other country in Europe—beginning in Russia with Glinka, Balakireff, and Moussorgsky, and culminating (if what is merely its latest manifestation to date can be referred to as its culmination) in the English Renaissance of Vaughan Williams, Von Holst, and others, of which even Ernest Newman is beginning to take some notice, although he did nothing to help the movement in its earlier stages. Most of these national movements are now in their third, fourth, or fifth stages: Scotland is only perhaps coming at last to the threshold of her first. Or rather not Scotland, but a few Scots are feeling their way towards it. Any incipient Scottish music will certainly receive no more encouragement from our orthodox—and self-appointed—arbiters in musical matters than the English movement in its earlier stages received from Newman. The provincialism which the average Scot has to the art of music—and by average Scot in this connection I mean the great majority of Scots who know anything about music at all—is due to the "inferiority complex" already referred to: he is perfectly willing to accept



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every kind of music except his own—as is evidenced in the concert programmes of the Scottish Orchestra, which, reflecting to a certain extent although they have done the advantages derived from the national movements in other countries, have apparently failed to create any realisation of the underlying lesson for ourselves. Scotland has still to learn the truth of what Cecil Forsyth says: "It must be confessed that in almost every generation there are two classes of men working and talking in opposition to each other—the nationalists and the denationalists. And the artistic health and productivity of any community increases exactly with its proportion of nationalists. The denationalists almost invariably have rank, wealth, and fashion at their backs. Indeed, but for the fact that they are a race of artistic eunuchs, the other party would never make any headway. But the people who *do*, generally get in front of those who *talk*." So far as Scotland is concerned, the trouble is that the denationalists have thus far had it all their own way, and that what nationalists there are have failed to do anything. But it is impossible that such a state of affairs can be indefinitely prolonged: the increasing national consciousness of Scotland cannot remain much longer unreflected in the sphere of music—subordinate to other people's nationalisms. Of men like Mackenzie, Forsyth well says: "A man of this sort often begins with great natural talent, and if it were possible for him to exercise that talent in a vacuum he would no doubt achieve much. But he does not live in a vacuum. He lives in a closely-packed continent throbbing with the highly developed and strongly differentiated groups of men which we call nations. As a rule he goes to Germany—the country whose technical proficiency is beyond question. There he masters all that the Germans can teach him. But when he returns home he does not ask himself whether after all his musical attainment is merely a brilliant sleight-of-hand, which anyone can pick up with cleverness and application. He does not say: 'I have learned so and so from the Germans: how did *they* learn it?' He accepts the German art of his day as a boy accepts a Christmas present of a box of conjuring tricks. He never honestly knows *why* the tricks are done and so is never able to invent a new one." Forsyth goes on to show that the effect of nationalism in music was "to awaken, as I have said,



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some half-a-dozen nations to the possibility of imitating—not the German music—but the Germans.” This is the lesson that Scotland has still to learn: until it is learnt Scotland can have no music of her own that is not mere translation of foreign idioms.

This brings me to F. G. Scott—the exception who proves the rule I have indicated—the only Scottish composer who has yet addressed himself to these issues and tackled the task of creating a distinctively Scottish idiom—a bridge-over from folk-song to art-form. The bulk of his work is still unpublished: and what is published is little known. I do not think that the musical critics of any of our dailies have so much as mentioned him yet in any connection: the only articles concerning him I have encountered are one by Miss Isobel Guthrie on “Contemporary Scots Composers: F. G. Scott, Joseph Halley, and Harry Hodge” in *The Scottish Nation*; another by the same lady on “Scottish Music and Mr Scott” in *The Northern Review*, and, in the same magazine, an account by Edwin Muir, of a “two-handed crack” on fundamental issues between Scott and himself at Salzburg. Scott’s importance lies in the fact that he is the first and apparently the only Scottish composer to appreciate the existing position. Owing to our almost equal lack of any effective literary tradition he has naturally found himself handicapped on that side, too. Practically nothing out of Burns or from the post-Burns period is susceptible of being “worked up” into art-form: for the simple reason that it has not sprung from the well-springs of the Scottish consciousness. It is miscegenate stuff. It is necessary to go right back to the fundamentals of Scottish mentality and to explore and exploit these, not in any jejune and superficial fashion, like Mackenzie and the others I have already mentioned, but in a thoroughgoing fashion that realises that the new wine cannot be put into the old bottles, or, in other words, that foreign forms will not serve to contain the material so found, but that it necessarily demands new forms distinctively its own—distinctively Scottish. The arts in Scotland are in a curiously interdependent state: they must advance almost simultaneously: music in particular must to a large extent wait upon poetry. Scott is essentially a lyric composer, and has suffered all the more from the latter fact. His early training was practically in the school of M’Ewen, and he

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was still almost entirely under the same influence, and had substantially the same "direction" right up to 1910. Almost everything he wrote prior to that date was in that tradition—in the tradition of Wagner, Strauss, and so on—but it is safe to say that he does not attach the slightest value to these tendencies now, and that it is extremely improbable that the compositions in which he exemplified them will ever be published. It is by such indirections that artists find directions out. In the work that he did next he went definitely back to the folk-song time—working under the literary influence of the "Auld Makars" and, in particular, of Dunbar—and his originality and value lies in the fact that he attempted to find expression, on the basis of our Folk-Song, through purely modern technical media. In other words, he belatedly and single-handedly set himself to the very task that would have been discharged in large measure long ere this had Scotland not been so inexplicably destitute of all sense of musical opportunity and so oblivious to every consideration of national self-respect in this connection. Albeit thus belated and obliged to do the "donkey-work," the mere brute pioneering, that at his time of day he ought to have found done for him by a little host of predecessors in a fashion that would have enabled him to commence on a plane upon which he would not have been so utterly at a disadvantage with his Continental compeers, all of whose "fathers lived before them," Scott, at least, had the advantage of having nothing to undo, and, thoroughly *au courant* with the whole field of contemporary music, and thus able to appreciate the uses to which nationalism in music has been put in other countries and the means whereby the varying difficulties in each of them have been successively overcome, he was enabled to approach his own task with a wealth of relevant experience of other people's and the accumulated advantages of several decades of musical development—*i.e.*, other things being equal, he was at least as much better equipped in certain directions coming to his task in 1910 as M'Ewen and others would (had the task challenged them as it would have done if they had been *en rapport* with the becoming tendencies of their times) have been twenty to thirty years earlier as he was handicapped, relatively to his European contemporaries, by the absence of forerunners in his particular field. He threw himself into his task with

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appropriate energy, and the results are pretty well embodied in his two volumes of "Scottish Lyrics" (Messrs Bayley and Ferguson), which certainly contain all the distinctively Scottish music that has so far been published—music in which the melodic line is perfectly Scottish and the technique perfectly modern.

It was, however, he soon found, impossible in the particular cultural circumstances of Scotland to continue along these lines. Owing to the desuetude of the Doric—or, rather, the tardiness of its revival—the necessary material is not available. Nor will it ever be: a Scottish Renaissance worth bothering about must necessarily elide this stage altogether. It is too late now. The trouble is that most people who are beginning to think about a Scottish Renaissance are envisaging the creation of work in music and the other arts at some indefinite time in the more or less immediate future that will, when—or rather would, if—produced be hopelessly passeist compared with the contemporary work of other countries. This is to take it for granted that Scotland must always be in the position of the cow's tail—that it can never "draw level." This is the negation of any true Renaissance spirit, which must necessarily be intent upon discovering short cuts to make up for lost ground. So far as music is concerned that is what Scott has been doing. While his "Scottish Lyrics" are still too advanced for our musical nation, he has perforce abandoned the lines upon which he was then working as pyrrhonic and unprofitable, and set off across country, as it were, to join issue at an intuitively anticipated point with the current of European musical development. In other words, Scott found that on the one hand there was not a sufficient *corpus* of Scottish lyrics available to make it worth his while to continue further along that particular line, and, on the other, that there was not only no guarantee but an increasing improbability that if he did he would be achieving his purpose—of bringing Scottish music, while it remained distinctively national, abreast of European tendency. His researches into the literary history of Scotland afforded him little help. In the two volumes in question he was concerned mainly with Burns: and they practically exhausted Burns so far as his purposes were concerned. He took Burns at his least popular—or, in other words, at his most specifically Scottish—and in the Burns *corpus*

that is an extremely limited element. On the one hand, therefore, he found himself driven back to Dunbar, and, on the other, the paucity of Scottish literary lyrics—i.e., not “wood notes wild,” but art products—has practically confined him latterly to the use of Hugh M'Diarmid's poems: and consequently he has been obliged to abandon the folk-song idiom and employ a modern international technique appropriate to contemporary world-consciousness. That is to say, he has now reached the stage at which he is doing work at once European and essentially Scottish which is too ultra-modern to find acceptance as music in Scotland and too Scottish to be acceptable as Scottish anywhere in our present denationalised condition. He is facing precisely the same difficulties on the musical side as have already been encountered on the literary side of the Scottish revival movement. It is significant that so far none of Scott's songs has been included in our Festival programmes—despite the fact that Mr Robertson has given it as his opinion, in one of his Orpheus Choir programmes, that he (Scott) is likely to profoundly affect the future of Scottish music. (Incidentally it should be said that practically any opportunity that Scott has had to affect the *present* of Scottish music has also come through Mr Robertson and his choir—notably Miss Boyd Steven—although here again it must be remembered that they have only got to the stage of being able to appreciate and utilise elements of Scott's work that he has almost completely outgrown.)

Just as on the literary side of the Scottish Renaissance it has been expressly declared that “we must make our own Continental affiliations irrespective of London, in accordance with the propensities and requirements of our own distinctive national psychology,” so, so far as music is concerned, Scott's radical variance from the *ethos* of most contemporary Scottish musicality is due in great measure to the fact that he does not wait for news of Continental developments to filter down to him *via* London. He is on the spot all the time. He establishes direct connections with Bartók in Hungary or Stravinsky in Switzerland as the case may be, and is alive to whatever is afoot as rapidly and directly as any of his English contemporaries. The importance of this cannot be overstressed. It is the only way in which our cultural subordination to England can be overcome. As long as we

are content to receive our information at second-hand from London we necessarily remain provincial. The deplorable condition of Scottish music is largely due to the poor quality of our contemporary musical criticism, which is wholly derivative, non-creative, and apparently unconcerned with the underlying realities. Over-Anglicisation has played a great part in bringing about this discreditable state of affairs. How many of our leading musicians in Scotland are, in fact, Englishmen — men like Professor Donald Tovey, Arthur Collingwood, and Professor Sanford Terry? And think of the Scottish Orchestra (that proud recourse of the Glasgow business man), which has never had a Scottish conductor in the whole course of its history—indeed, this year, it is not to have even a British one at all!

How far is the condition of the arts in Scotland due to the "moralic acid" to which our boys and girls are subjected during the most impressionable period of their lives? Our absence of all tradition or sense of tradition in these matters must be largely attributable to the fact that (until comparatively recently) practically no Scot has been trained as a professional artist, whether in music or in any other department. Scottish parents have wanted their children to be anything but that. The consequences of this cannot be easily if ever overcome. Ezra Pound was not far wrong when he advocated the establishment of Poets' Schools, in which boys and girls could be trained to become poets. In Scotland we can connect this with our own history by deploring the cessation and advocating the restoration of the old Bardic Colleges. It is certainly true that at the present time there is no place in Scotland where any of our young people can secure the higher branches of musical training along nationalistic lines. What is wanted is not academic but creative training. It is presently proposed to establish a Chair of Music in Glasgow University. Will we be any the better of that? Not a bit. The proposal is entirely supererogatory as far as musical realities in Scotland to-day are concerned. It merely means a closer affiliation with the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music—a further step in the effort to entirely assimilate Scottish to English tendency. The English Renaissance exemplified in such men as Vaughan Williams, Bridge, Bax, Ireland, Holst, Bliss, Berners and Goossens, is largely the product of the in-

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tensive training of these institutions—largely the result of the work of Stanford and Corder: but to connect Glasgow more closely up with them is to subject Scotland to the backwash of the English movement in lieu of that genuine movement of our own which is so long overdue. It is irony, indeed, that our “denationalisers,” as Forsyth calls them, should be using the English nationalists in this way, and that the latter should be the instruments of an intrigue—conscious or unconscious—to prevent Scots following their example and doing for Scotland what they have succeeded in accomplishing for England. But Scott is apparently the only Scottish musician who is alive to the irony involved and concerned to create any counter-movement. One of the first things Hungary did when it reacquired its status as a separate nation was to appoint Bartok and Kodaly as its head instructors in the Conservatoire at Budapest. Czecho-Slovakia acted similarly. The recent history of music in these countries attests the prescience of the step. Scotland cannot hope to emulate either of them as long as it entrusts musical education in Scotland wholly or mainly to non-nationals. As for the Musical Festival Movement (to which I shall recur) it claims to be an educational movement, and so it is, but not in the sense with which I am presently concerned. It is to some extent educative of interpreters, but not of creators. The musical vitality of any country is to be estimated by the latter, not by the former—and of the latter whom have we, or have we ever had, except F. G. Scott, whose deficiencies as a representative composer are largely attributable to the cultural condition of the country to which he happens to belong, but whose work, despite all the handicaps with which he has had to contend in a virgin field, is nevertheless far more than any other artistic product of contemporary Scotland comparable to the best products in its kind of any other country in Europe?



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

GEORGE RESTON MALLOCH.

Who are the twenty principal Scottish poets? It is easy enough to name the first ten, not of a size, it is true, but comparable enough, without being driven to such an extremity as would place, say, Fergusson, or, even worse, Tannahill in the list—without, that is to say, considering as poets rhymesters of a kind customarily so considered in Scotland but in no other country. Of these three would be Gaelic poets—Alexander Macdonald, Duncan Bàn MacIntyre, and Dugald Buchanan. But it is impossible to add to the ten without suggesting names obviously incongruous—making mountains of comparative poetical molehills, such as one-song singers, or stretching the term “poet” in the peculiarly Scottish fashion I have referred to—so long as you stick to the past. But coming to the present it is not difficult to complete the twenty. In other words, Scotland to-day possesses at least ten poets superior to all except the greatest ten it has had in the whole course of its literary history. I waive discussion in the meantime of their comparability with—or with any of—the first ten. That is to say, it is not my present purpose to attempt to arrange the list of our twenty greatest Scottish poets in order of merit. I will only say that in certain respects—as “pure poets,” as conscious artists—some of these contemporaries are, in my opinion, greater than any of their predecessors, and, simply because they are our contemporaries, all of them should have our attention to a greater degree. But, apart from that, that we should have living

to-day a group of poets superior—and for the most part immensely superior in many if not all ways—to all but the ten greatest poets our race has ever produced, is an astonishing fact and probably without parallel in the literary history of any other country in the world for many centuries. Two further remarks must be made—first, that nevertheless this does not mean that the group in question equals or even compares favourably with other contemporary or past groups of poets in other countries—any more than the greatest ten poets Scotland has produced compare favourably, let alone equally, with the greatest ten English, or French, or Italian, or Russian poets: Scotland has not overcome its radical inferiority in this and every other art—and, secondly, there is every likelihood that the group in question is simply fore-running a succession of major Scottish poets, writing either in English or Scots or both, destined to appear within the next half-century, and to transcend the present group as completely as they transcend all but an infinitesimal proportion of their predecessors. Of this second ten to make up the desiderated score, the subject of the present essay, George Reston Malloch, who also claims attention as a dramatist, a critic, and a short-story writer, is emphatically one. The others are—of the older school of our contemporaries—Dr Ronald Campbell Macfie, Sir Ronald Ross, Lord Alfred Douglas, and Dr Pittendrigh MacGillivray; and of the younger school, Muriel Stuart, Edwin Muir, F. V. Branford, John Ferguson, and, I think, William Jeffrey, with Professor Alexander Gray and Rachael Annand Taylor as “runners-up.” I do not say that there are not other living Scots poets in addition to these who transcend all their predecessors but the foremost ten: there are—I think I could name at least another ten—but I simply assert that these at any rate *do*, and challenge any critic to name more than ten Scottish poets not now alive—including Sir Walter Scott, Byron, and, if you like, Ben Jonson—in a superior category to any one of these. This may not mean a great deal: it may only mean that we have never had more poets of any appreciable size than can be counted on the fingers. It is purely an internal measurement—a question of domestic precedence, and throws little light, if any, on the relative stature of any of these whom I have named as *poets*. But what I am concerned about in setting out

the issue in this fashion is the fact that even of the extremely limited poetry-reading public in Scotland to-day probably not ten per cent are cognisant of these names or at any rate most of them; that "Scottish Poetry" is a term which does not connote a corpus of which their work is an admitted, let alone an appreciated, element, but almost wholly implies something vastly inferior; that our Scottish press and platform have entirely failed to accord due recognition to any of them; that there are no media in Scotland through which most of them can publish their work; and that there are all sorts of societies and organisations at work for the perpetual glorification of comparative pignies whose claims to even that sort of immortality any other country in the world would long ago have turned down in no uncertain fashion even if they had had nothing better to put in their place. Read their names over again. No Scottish paper or periodical (except the short-lived organs of the Scottish Renaissance movement) has ever printed a considered article on most of them; their books have been reviewed as of no more consequence than the ruck of contemporary poetry publishing: articles are devoted instead to Helen Adam, to John Smellie Martin, to Gilbert Rae and other nonentities. Most of my list live outwith Scotland and perforce write for English periodicals and the English public. In my opinion this compulsory denationalisation—this divorcement from their natural public—this immersion in the milieu of a different and largely antipathetic culture—has prevented most of them from reaching their full poetical stature: and none of them has it inhibited or subverted more in some ways and developed in others than Malloch, although Malloch is so constituted by temperament and so situated in point of age that he may yet win through by reorienting his efforts on intensively nationalistic lines. He has indeed begun to do so. In subject-matter and purpose much of his recent poetry is more positively Scottish: he has even been experimenting—not unsuccessfully—with the Braid Scots medium: but it is as a dramatist perhaps that he will yet have proved to have recovered himself most effectively by his receptivity to the Renaissance ideas.

Of Malloch's "Poems and Lyrics" (1917), the distinguished Dutch litterateur, Roel Houwinck, said, "Malloch, a true lyricist, gives a clear expression to his com-

paratively variable moods. Yet they all have, even in the simplest rhythms, the troubled background of the changing spirit of to-day. The construction of the verses and their intricate music are excellent but behind are such wild and frightened echoes that all brilliancy of form is lost. . . . This poet is close to an interior revolution; he will not be able to maintain for any length of time the beautiful outward balance of his verse." And then in 1920, *apropos* Malloch's new volume of "Poems," Houwinck wrote: "I am sorry that Malloch is beginning to fall off. Not that this book is worse than the former one, but it is no better. If he were not in every respect a young poet we should perhaps pass by these faults with a shrug of the shoulders in the belief that we were confronted with the tragic but harmonious decay of a mistaken talent or attribute them at best to slovenliness of workmanship. But the fact that Malloch has in him the germ of originality which appears so extraordinarily seldom in literature obliges our judgment to be very strict. Every generation has its ideals, and they hold as well on aesthetic as on moral grounds, when it is a question of realising one's full responsibility, or a case of performing a difficult duty and putting the interests of culture before personal considerations. The critic especially is far too ready to put his hand upon his heart and to avoid all unpleasantness by letting a witty or a general review suffice. But just at this time when we stand at the turning of the tide the critic's task is sharply defined: to preface the way for the new, in so far as this is manifested in forms intelligible in terms of time (the educational element); and in the same way to appraise the old in so far as this is manifested in forms intelligible in terms of time (the historic element). This two-fold duty of criticism can be properly performed only so long as it abstains from primitive and negative personal concessions, which can in the long run be of no use to the parties concerned."

These extracts from Houwinck's critiques are of extraordinary import from the point of view of the Scottish Renaissance. Houwinck detected in Malloch a state of affairs—a looking for something—which the instinct that created the movement towards a Scottish Renaissance believed must be equally present in every other Scottish writer of Malloch's age and under, and which could only be satisfied by its programme. This "interior revolution"

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properly consummated should have resulted in a new nationalism of purpose—a new and inspiring realisation of the potentialities latent in being Scots. 1917-20—The destiny of Scottish literature—no less than Malloch's own destiny as an author—indeed stood at the turning-point then: and the two were intimately connected. Only in so far as Malloch could react with increased creativity, with improved art—either for or against, be it remarked—to the “becoming” tendencies of Scottish consciousness as a purposive factor in world-culture then—could Houwinck's hopes be realised; and the same is true of all Malloch's generation and of the younger generation at that time—they only had, and had a chance of expressing, significance so far as Scottish literature (or the other arts) is concerned, to the extent to which they were conscious of “something in the air” in those years—of some imponderable problem affecting the basis of their creative constitution about to be resolved—and succeeded in reacting profitably to it. That Houwinck should have intuitively realised all this is a tribute to his extraordinary perspicacity: and confirms what I have said elsewhere of the simultaneity of anticipation affecting Scottish writers at that juncture and of the pervasive power of the factors which were then moving to bring Scotland into line with the new nationalism which was developing simultaneously in so many countries, and to initiate the Scottish Renaissance movement. Malloch did, I think, as a poet and certainly as a dramatist—and has continued to—react profitably to his own artistic integrity, and therefore success. I think his next volume of poems will give Houwinck ample reassurance. “She dissects a Flower,” for example, which appeared in *The Scottish Chapbook*, in an especially convincing bit of work, and certainly deserves a place in any anthology of the finest post-War poems in the English language.

Writing of Malloch's poetry in *The Scottish Chapbook*, I said that “It is a very considerable record of subtle but important spiritual and technical experiences, and whatever ultimate values it may have in itself, it represents a course in feeling and experimental expression which every Scottish poet who is to be of consequence must take somehow or other. The quickest way for most of them would be to read Malloch's poems in the candid light of questions such as these:—‘Malloch is a contemporary Scot:

so am I. How do my psychological resources compare with his? Can I similarly extend my 'awareness'—or am I definitely confined to the lower plane of consciousness upon which Scottish poetry has hitherto moved? How does he secure his effects? What background of imaginative apprehension or actual experience, and of culture generally, is necessary before one can even conceive such effects?' In short, a study of Malloch's work shows the irremediable poverty in accessibility to ideas and sensations and in spontaneous suggestionability of the average Scottish versifier's consciousness, and when these preliminary questions have been answered, secondary questions arise—in how far has Malloch by getting rid of the general repressions of his race become denationalised, or, on the other hand, realised the submerged potentialities, not only of his own personal but of Scottish national psychology? How is his work differentiated from that of his English contemporaries, and is that differentiation due to the fact that he is a Scotsman or to other factors? . . . Too many Scots regard Scottish literature as, in effect, a "country cousin" of English literature, comparatively pedestrian and provincial, subject to severe technical limitations, destitute of cultural associations, confined to a certain set of themes and of a narrow mental and moral range. These cannot be expected to regard Malloch as really a Scottish poet any more than they regard Ben Jonson as a Scottish poet. They will say 'He may be a Scotsman, but for all practical purposes his poetry is English poetry.' They cannot be expected to appreciate the subtle spiritual differences which distinguish all that is Scottish from all that is English even where (often most acutely where) superficial appearances convey impressions of absolute identity. . . . 'For all practical purposes' is a temporary phrase even though the period to which it is applicable may be the whole of our subsequent history as a United Kingdom, and I unhesitatingly assert that the psychological difficulties which are innumerosely resolved in Malloch's work are, save where they are difficulties with which modern consciousness in general is dealing (*i.e.*, present to every contemporary consciousness above a certain level), Scottish difficulties as distinct from English ones, although the differences can hardly be appreciated without a comprehensive apprehension of the psychological histories of the two peoples. Little prejudices



are discernible here or there (or the facts of little prejudices having been overcome); spiritual atmospheres are created; moral tendencies reveal themselves; instincts are in evidence; minutiae of personality; shadows of old controversies, which cannot be mistaken by anyone who has ever gazed into the heart of Scottish history. These are most essentially different from the corresponding prejudices, affectations, instincts, sense of background, etc., appreciable in English work; the psychological content is entirely different; the savour of separate traditions, of diverse destinies, is disengaged. . . . Malloch is claimed as an English poet, but—with a difference; and because of that difference critics have a difficulty in placing him, of dealing comprehensively with him. They do not refer back his subtle distinctions to their demonstrable origins. One or two critics indeed appreciate Malloch's true qualities as an individual poet. 'Alike in depth and reality of sentiment, as in technical originality and interest,' says Arthur Waugh, 'Mr Malloch is very clearly a Georgian to be reckoned with among the most suggestive of his time.' And *The Times Literary Supplement* says that he is 'a poet whose work has many merits which call for a careful and sympathetic study, who is not afraid to discover in life more than an artistic seriousness, who is hurt by the discords of his time and finds it hard to reconcile them with an inner and absolute harmony of which he is aware, who is capable of that craftsmanship which is implied in an exact, appropriate and economical expression of what he has to say. We move here, then, in a region of sincerities, away from the affected manufacture of form or formlessness which is the sign of unsubstantiated invention, away from the mannerism which is the mark of indolent habit, preferring to repeat a metaphor rather than originate one, from the display of cunning and casuistry which is the profitable weapon of every trade but the poet's.'

Of how many Scottish poets past or present can the like be said—how many of them have done work than can be discussed on that level at all? Malloch as a poet is, as I have said, unquestionably one of our greatest twenty: I agree, too, with Waugh that as a Georgian he ought—despite his subtle fundamental difference from the others—to rank in critical esteem with Walter de la Mare and J. C. Squire and other leading English poets of the day—

but he is too Scottish, albeit elusively, for English taste, perhaps, and too truly and purely a poet for Scottish taste—but his day will come. In the meantime, perhaps the best of his work is still to come. Whether or not, he will rank as one of the first score of poets in English in the first quarter of the twentieth century. He is worthy of far more consideration than he has yet received, alike from the point of view of English (or British) and of Scottish poetry.

As dramatic critic of *The Scottish Nation* he showed a technical knowledge, an independent standpoint, and a wide sympathy which make his articles one of the outstanding features of that periodical, and showed by contrast the comparative worthlessness of the shallow gossip that passes for dramatic criticism in the small paragraphs from time to time given over to such a negligible matter in the majority of Scottish papers. As the critic of English literature attached to the Amsterdam *Hagensblatt* Malloch has shown himself an able liaison officer between Dutch and British culture.

Finally, as a dramatist, Malloch has recently shown himself one of the few dramatists yet connected in any way with the Scottish National Players who are of any real promise. Two of his plays have been published by the Scottish Poetry Bookshop, and one of these, "Thomas the Rhymer," has been produced both by the Scottish and the Lennox players. It, and "The House of the Queen," a beautiful little allegory of the ideal at the base of the Scottish Renaissance movement, are a fine first contribution to a Scottish drama of ideas, and slight although they are, have no little significance and may have no little influence. Both are consummately wrought. Of what other plays in the history of Scotland can this be said? Of exceedingly few. If Malloch could apply—as he may—his technique to a really dynamic theme in a full-dress drama he might vitalise the whole movement towards a Scottish national drama. No other Scottish playwright has yet appeared who is in the least likely to do anything of the kind.

Writing of Malloch as a dramatist in *The Northern Review*, Alan Wylie has said: "I do not go so far as to say Mr Malloch is the dramatist for whom we have been waiting—it is not fair to judge from two short plays—but I do say he has it in his power to be. There is something

in them despite their experimental character that is new to the Scottish stage, something which reminds one of the early days of the Irish revival. For one thing they are unmistakably Scottish, and that is what cannot be said of the Moffat school, just as Yeats or Synge is specifically Irish. That in itself is an achievement. . . . 'The House of the Queen' may yet be the 'Kathleen ni Houlihan' of the Scottish movement. At least I know of no other play to which to compare it. The two are exactly parallel, but Mr Malloch is no imitator. The call of nationalism is universal, but it takes in each case its own form. Mr Yeats' Queen demanded battle—no Celt could demand other. Mr Malloch asks that we build. Could the basic distinction between the two have been better revealed? These two plays give Mr Malloch a new significance and our country a new hope. Nearer and nearer comes the dawn."

Mr Malloch has published:—

*Poems*—"Lyrics and Other Verses" (London: Elkin Matthews, 1913); "Poems and Lyrics" (Heinemann, 1917; "Poems" (Heinemann, 1920).

*Plays*—"A Night with Burns" (produced Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, 1910, and subsequently on tour); *The Birthright*, 1912; *Arabella*, 1913; "Thomas the Rhymer" and "The House of the Queen" (Scottish Poetry Bookshop, 1924), and since the above was written, "Soutariness Water," to which I refer in a subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

FREDERICK VICTOR BRANFORD.

The lamentable plight of current literary journalism in Great Britain cannot be better illustrated than by "The Bookman's" treatment of F. V. Branford's latest volume of poems: "The White Stallion." It was reviewed in the May (1925) issue of that periodical by the well-known Irish poetess, Katharine Tynan, and this is what she said of it: "'The White Stallion' ought not to come after any volumes of verse, however good; it should stand by itself in its own class, or with its peers. If it is anything at all it is great poetry, in a manner we have grown unaccustomed to. One is not surprised to find Mr Branford saluting Francis Thompson. I do not find anywhere in 'The White Stallion' the enchantment of Francis Thompson in, for example, 'Dream Tryst,' but I do find his magnificence. There are no 'isms,' no freaks and fashions, nothing of its day only. Mr Branford is of the great day that is always with us. He has an apocalyptic vision and an inspired vocabulary. I give no specimens of his work. They cannot be detached. He is in the great line of English poets." Now "The Bookman" is not scant of space. Many columns of the same issue were—as in every issue—devoted to negligible comments on negligible publications, to trivial personalia, and publishers' puffery of various sorts. It is not every month surely that any literary journal has the opportunity of hailing the advent of one who "is in the great line of English poets." Such a phenomenon might well be given the whole issue to himself. If "The Bookman" is to be accounted a literary

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organ—if its readers are intelligent people interested in literature—such a course would be a natural and widely approved one, and would redound to the credit of the periodical that took it and build up a reputation for it. It could always claim that “at any rate we recognised Branford for what he was at first glance and gave him something like his due.” But no! “The Bookman” and Mrs Hinkson took no such course. What I have quoted was all that was said of Branford and his book. Had I been Mrs Hinkson and felt as she did, I would at least have seen that my review of “The White Stallion” did stand alone. It would, I think, have been a perfectly simple matter to arrange with any editor. A contributor of Mrs Hinkson’s standing would surely have had no difficulty at all events in getting her own way in a matter of this sort. Instead of that, in a whole-page review of seven books of poetry, it was dealt with fourth and received precisely fourteen lines—less than a seventh of the space at Mrs Hinkson’s disposal. The only other volume of the seven that was not utterly negligible from every point of view was at all events comparatively negligible compared with Branford’s: it would not have mattered if no mention had been made of any of them, so far as the critical status of the “Bookman” was concerned, but the latter would have been enhanced had the entire space been devoted to Branford. And as to the editor—does he know what is going to appear in his periodical before it actually does, if then? If he does—if he saw Mrs Hinkson’s paragraph—I may be excused the naivete of asking why in the name of all that is inexplicable he did not get excited and cry, “In the great line of English poets? My dear Mrs Hinkson! Are you sure? But, of course, you wouldn’t say so unless you were. I know that I can trust your judgment. Well, this is a great discovery. We must make the most of it—just by way of showing that ‘The Bookman’ at least can do a little now and then to counterbalance the contemporary neglect that has been the unhappy portion of so many of our greatest poets. I have written for a copy of Branford’s poems for myself. I wish you had devoted all your article to him, but since you didn’t I want you to write a long article—a detailed study of his work—for our next issue. I am arranging for photographs, etc., to accompany it, and a personal sketch by someone who knows him. And I think I shall get half-a-dozen or so

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of our leading *litterateurs* to contribute to a symposium on the precise quality of his genius and the place he is likely to take in the long run. That seems to me the least we can do. What is a literary periodical for if it cannot rise to such an outstanding occasion as this?"

But I am not so *naïve* as to imagine that the editor of "The Bookman" did anything of the kind or, in fact, thought anything about it, or that Branford's name has since crossed Mrs Hinkson's mind at all—or that her portentous utterance so ludicrously spatchcocked into the usual reviewer's gossip carried the slightest conviction to anybody or even raised the curiosity of a single reader. It is a well-known fact that the great bulk of reviewing of books which do not boom for extra-literary reasons scarcely sells a copy more than would sell in any case: and that reviewing fails to exercise its natural functions is no wonder when reviewing is done in this way. And Mrs Hinkson is by no means the worst offender. Apart from an article on Branford I wrote for the *New Age*—and one by the Dutch poet, Wilhelm Klemm, of which I published a translation in "The Northern Review"—I know of no other article as distinct from a mere review, devoted anywhere to him so far. And yet consider the reviews of his first book "Titans and Gods." The *Daily News* said: "A first volume so memorable that it must mean the establishment of a new poetic reputation." "The Bookman" said: "It is a long time since the tree of English poetry has put forward such a tremendous branch." And the *Saturday Review* said: "It reveals his inspiration to be more exalted than we have been accustomed to since the death of Francis Thompson." And so on. The fact of Branford's genius is recognised by nearly every reviewer—but they are not really interested and cannot interest the public. They have no words appropriate to such an advent: all their superlatives have already been used and reused on worthless work—they can only say once again the pontifical nothings they have already said *ad nauseam* of a multitude of comparatively negligible writers. It is impossible that all these reviewers can be other than destitute of all sense of literary integrity and can feel the natural disinterested thrill of discovery their words should connote, so long as they say what they do and rest content with the inability to do more for genius when for once they do encounter it than as publishers' hacks they do



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habitually for scores of poetasters, the mere publication of whose work on the usual terms is neither more nor less than a form of fraud.

Mrs Hinkson and the other reviewers I have quoted, in statements that must, I am sure, strike the average reader as necessarily grossly exaggerated, announced no more than the bare truth. Branford belongs, despite the fact that he is a Scotsman and that in intellection and "direction" as apart from form and vocabulary he is demonstrably Scottish rather than English, to the central English tradition. In previous articles I have quoted Edwin Muir's statement that no Scottish imaginative artist has risen in the medium of English to the second or even to the third rank, and expressed my agreement with it. Branford is no exception to this rule. Looking to the long line of English poets he will not be found to be of even third-rate calibre—but if he is of fourth-rate or fifth-rate he will yet belong to a very small band and be a poet of outstanding consequence and one of an exceedingly small number of like or greater stature Scotland has contributed to *welt-literatur* in the whole course of its history. And though so considered he may be found to be only fourth-rate that does not mean that he is not of first-rate consequence to-day—ours must be an exceedingly rich generation, indeed, if he is not; and while on the general balance of all the factors that go to comprise poetical stature he may fall far below giants such as Milton and Wordsworth and Shelley—it is nevertheless such comparisons and no lesser ones than he challenges, and in certain respects—in some one quality or technical gift that is his own, the quintessence of his genius—he may transcend all his predecessors however much they in turn transcend him in other and more important qualities. Branford's relation to English poetry puts him as a Scottish poet in very much the same position so far as this generation of Scots is concerned as Lord Alfred Douglas's in respect of his generation. The work of both is almost completely assimilated to the best English models in its own kind. Branford is more fortunate than Douglas—he lives in a greater age. Flawless in form Douglas's sonnets—among the most consummate in the English language though they are—belong to the eighteen-nineties, to the *fin-de-siècle* school, in subject-matter, in vocabulary, in their whole tone and texture. Branford's work is not so "dated"—can never so "date." It has, as Mrs Hinkson says, "nothing of its day only."

"Poets 'in the true line,'" I wrote in *The New Age*,

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"generally have a sure intuition of their place in relation to their forerunners and contemporaries. They 'know themselves.' The verses in which they explicitly assume the sacred mantle are always worthy of note. Poetasters may try to ape them in this respect—but their claims can never ring true. The test is almost infallible. Let a poet define in a poem his relation to poetry as a whole (or to a certain great succession) and he cannot but measure himself exactly. I remember in this connection (apart from the famous instance of Milton's set purpose) certain assured verses of Charles Doughty's. I remember Flecker's 'To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence':—

'Read out my words at night, alone:

I was a poet, I was young.'

And Branford, inveighing against Colour Prejudice, Imperial lust, 'Patriotism,' 'demons of contention that enhavoc nations,' can declare in a passage that reduces practically the whole of Georgianism to an impertinent journalistic babble:—

'Against those dark Dominions the great doom  
Of song pours down the aeons. Rank on rank,  
Through futile fields to fertile victories,  
In truceless war the white battalions press;  
*I least and latest marching am yet mailed*  
Greatly, and weaponed from a forge whose might  
Passes the hands of Vulcan, for I wield  
Engines invincible dreamed in the brain of God.  
Loud is my lyre, and great in labour grown  
With strains, committed to its nervous charge,  
Of harmony and fruitful toil between  
Nature and Man, the Mortal Deities;  
Unconquerable Antagonists, that bleed  
Blindly in barren battle to no end,  
Bearing the banner of the common fate  
And common weal o' the world, I hold at bay  
Night and the horded rabble of her priests.'

There speaks no 'idle singer of an empty day,' but one conscious of power, purpose, and place. His lyre may be occasionally *too* loud; but he attempts nothing common or mean; and, addressing himself solely to major issues and boldly dealing with entire integrity with the difficulties of art to-day and the problem of its functions in the contemporary world, his failures are infinitely more victorious than the petty triumphs of the vast majority of those contemporary English poets who have achieved a little ephemeral reputation."

I went on to discuss his stature as a poet in comparison with certain of his contemporaries. "'The Times

Literary Supplement,' " I said, " recently devoted a column to Robert Graves's 'Mock Beggar Hall' and dismissed 'The White Stallion' with a short paragraph. 'Mock Beggar Hall' is certainly in the current English fashion; but we are told that 'the solution of the conflict between sense and idea, the finite and the infinite . . . is condensed very finely into such lines as these:—

Yet beyond all this rest content  
In dumbness to revere  
Infinite God without event,  
Causeless, not there, nor here.  
Neither eternal nor time-bound,  
Not certain, not in change,  
Uncancelled by the cosmic round  
Nor crushed within its range.

Compare this with Branford's song of the 'Spirits of the Heavens' in 'Wonderchild':—

Who returneth whence he came,  
Through Night of Nothing to Thy heart.  
By the Bridge of Sin and Shame  
He shall know Thee, who Thou art.  
Who hath died so deep in life  
That Death disdain him for his dart,  
Shall turn in fierce and loving strife  
On Thee and know Thee who Thou art.  
Who shall prevail, in awful grace  
Of love, o'er Thee, shall surely run  
With fire and wind before Thy face;  
He is thy Beloved Son.  
Who this secret shall acclaim  
He the Many, Thou the One,  
Through doubt, and fear, and sin, and shame  
He is Thy Beloved Son.

The difference clearly shows Branford's relative stature. Despite all their technical accomplishments, the majority of the Georgians are, by definition, minor poets. Branford, however serious his inequalities, is unmistakably a major poet, and as such is a phenomenon of sufficiently infrequent occurrence to merit at least a page where small fry like Graves command a column. One final comparison. Take Sir William Watson's *Lacrimae Musarum* (Tennyson's Death) with lines such as these:—

And thou, the Mantuan of this age and soil  
With Virgil shalt survive  
Enriching Time with no less honeyed spoil,  
The yielded sweet of every muse's hive;  
Heeding no more the sound of idle praise

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In that great calm our tumults cannot reach  
Master who crown'st our immelodious days  
With flower of perfect speech.

And set against it Branford's *Novissima Verba* (in memory of Francis Thompson) with lines such as these :—

For when the steep and single beam his trinal  
Ray shoots brightening here in sound and flame  
Through finite forms that wither in the final  
Truth, Rarity and Beauty they proclaim;  
Then zealous of Himself, the Sacred Fire  
Not lavish of the immortalising light,  
Himself unto Himself from his own pyre  
Draws fairly in proud secret splendour home to  
Height.

Saint of High Song, of Him thou dost inherit  
Whom Height assumed from cross as thee from  
curse . . . .

But who am I to brave that dread dominion  
In zones our faint songs fear and fail to soar,  
Uranian Eagle, towering on a pinion  
Serener than the Swan of Avon bore?  
I do but dare to touch thy tomb as one  
Of those sad heathen priests in Asian night  
Who made audacious offering to the sun  
Of fire and fruit with faltering hand and veiled sight."

These extracts amply justify Mr C. K. M'Kenzie's declaration that "there is no other Scottish-born poet who is so significant as Mr Branford. Modern in his whole outlook, he is artistically the legitimate successor of Francis Thompson, for he holds against the modern schools that a poem can contain as well as provoke thought, can express a philosophy as well as induce a sensation. His inspiration is the combination of intuition and reflection; it controls him, but in its expression is controlled, and so he belongs to the great succession of our poet-thinkers. One does not say that defines him, for he can drop philosophy for the lyric as well as any but . . . even the balanced music of the *Novissima Verba* addressed to Thompson's memory are overshadowed by 'The White Stallion' and 'Wonderchild.' Both are, it is explained, symbols—the one of 'the transcendental, yet indestructible, incarnation of all Nature,' the other of 'the creative spirit in spiritual energy pressing forward in conflict with the power of negation,' and the philosophy they teach is that 'the intuition of change which is Art and the intuition of stability which is Religion are both visions of reality, valid each in its own right.' That sentence alone indicates how far

he differs from his legitimate ancestors, and into what new realms of thought his spirit travels. Some day learned men will explore these realms with slower feet and write learned work on Mr Branford's philosophy. . . . I do not think Mr Branford has fully found himself, at least to the extent of simplifying himself to others, but of the originality and tremendousness of his verse there is no doubt whatever. He is at once a portent and an example."

Mr Branford has published:—

*"Titans and Gods"* (Messrs Christophers); *"The White Stallion"* (Messrs Christophers); *"The Iron Flower and Other Poems"* (Porpoise Press Broadsheet).

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.

JOHN FERGUSON.

There are three John Fergusons in Scottish literature to-day. It is John Ferguson, the sonneteer, with whom I am presently concerned, and not the John Ferguson, the dramatist and novelist, author of such plays as "The King of Morven" and such novels as "The Dark Geraldine," nor the third John Ferguson, who wrote that fine historical novel, "Mr Kello," and subsequently published a "History of Witchcraft." My Mr Ferguson's total output probably contains fewer words than either of the others have used in half-a-dozen of the hundreds of pages of description or dialogue they have written: but apart from the fact that he has confined himself to a category of literature into which the others have not penetrated—the sonnet-form—and that their work is therefore not easily comparable, he is by far the most important of the three. All of them have done work of excellent quality and of real value to contemporary Scottish literature: but the author of "Thyrea"—the title of Mr Ferguson's one book (his only other published work, apart from a volume of juvenilia, is an edition of the sonnets of David Gray) is one of the most extraordinary figures in the world of poetry to-day, and is certainly assured of a measure of immortality. His restraint is perhaps his most remarkable attribute. He has confined himself exclusively to the sonnet and has achieved a complete, quite distinctive, extraordinarily popular, and probably perdurable expression in a minimum of sonnets even. It seems an impossible accomplishment at this time of day. His total tale of published work is fifty



sonnets. His book originally consisted of seven sonnets, and attracted immediate and widespread attention. It is no ordinary poet who has the self-confidence to come before the modern public with so slight a production: and yet on that basis Mr Ferguson has erected an ever-increasing reputation, which has never tempted him into over-production in the very slightest degree, or led him to essay any other form. His book is now in its twelfth edition—a most unusual, if not unique, achievement in the long history of sonneteering, and assuredly one that has no parallel in modern British literature. All of these have been strictly *editions*, although four of them were at one time erroneously described as reprints. The author has made alterations every time his book has gone to press. “Thyrea: A Sonnet-Sequence from a Sanatorium” itself consists of only seven sonnets: the rest of his output is grouped as “Other Sonnets.”

The second edition contained an introduction by Dr W. L. Courtney. After a reference to the first form in which the little book appeared and to the fact that it reminded certain critics of Henley’s Hospital poems—which, however, it only to some extent resembled in subject-matter and setting and certainly not in tone or tendency—Dr Courtney observed that: “Mr John Ferguson has an individual note which gives distinction to his work. He confines himself to the sonnet-form, which he handles with considerable ease and skill, and I think he is at his best when he deals with solemn themes. Read, for instance, ‘L’Envoi,’ or ‘Chopin’s Marche Funèbre’ or ‘Beethoven,’ and you will recognise the dignity of Mr Ferguson’s muse and his capacity for august harmonies. But he has another aspect of his work to give us, a modern, up-to-date quality which comes out in ‘A Chorus-Girl,’ ‘Smith—Bank Accountant,’ and ‘A Low Comedian.’ In this mood he does not hesitate to write a line like ‘Twice nightly thus, for thirty bob a week,’ or ‘His “biz” and “cackle” done he gets a “round,”’ in which he deliberately sets himself to be at all hazards realistic. What precisely a sonnet should include and what is its essential character are, of course, vexed questions. In the practice of the best poets it is usually confined to the analysis of a situation, the exploration of a mood, the dissection of a personality, or the vivid rendering of a strong impression. Our author extends its scope, including, here and there, mere narration.

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Each reader, I hope, will find his own favourite in this charming collection of pieces, but to my mind the author has never done better than in the last six lines of the sonnet dedicated to David Gray." And Dr Courtney concludes his austere commendation by expressing the hope that the last couplet of Mr Ferguson's sonnet in question may apply to "Thyrea" as well as to "The Luggie." The sonnet is as follows:—

Others have poured forth loftier strains than thine,  
And Fame has placed her laurels on their brow :  
Not Shakespeare's vision, Shelley's flush of wine,  
Nor Milton's organ voice thou hadst ; but thou  
Didst sob thy soul in sorrow through the years,  
And swan-like, sang'st thyself to Lethe's wave ;  
And obstinate Fame, that spurned thy passionate tears  
Reluctant laid her wreath upon thy grave.  
But while the fern-fringed Luggie flows along,  
And Bothlin sings herself into the sea ;  
While lovers stray Glenconner's glooms among,  
And storied Night holds Merkland's dreams in fee,  
Fragrant thy memory, and thy star shall be  
Luminous among the lesser orbs of song.

The late Mr T. W. H. Crosland, in his fine provocative book on "The English Sonnet," laid it down that "when great poetry is being produced, great sonnets are being produced; and when great sonnets cease to be produced, great poetry ceases to be produced." It is certainly an excellent augury for the position the present time will occupy as compared with any previous time in the literary history of Scotland, when it can be viewed in historical perspective, that we should have two living masters of the sonnet in Lord Alfred Douglas and Mr Ferguson. These are the twin—if very dissimilar—peaks of Scottish accomplishment in this form : and, what is more, it is only within comparatively recent times that Scottish literature has thrown up sonnet-work of any consequence at all, apart from theirs. But already a little anthology of Scottish sonnets could be compiled that would compare favourably—not with English, not with Italian—but with that of almost any other country, I think. Robert Buchanan wrote some great sonnets; John Barlas deserves more recognition in this respect than he has yet received; Lewis Spence has written at least two sonnets in Old Scots which ought

to have been included in "The Northern Muse," and are certainly not only by far the best, and indeed almost the only, sonnets in our Doric literature but, apart from the language question altogether, two fine sonnets.

Mr Ferguson's dignity and capacity for august harmonies may appeal most to Dr Courtney, but, from the point of view of modern Scottish letters, a greater significance attaches to his comedic work. A Catholic fun, the humour of the saints, is at the basis of it. No one who realises the enormous *vis comica* latent in Scottish life can fail to appreciate the true inwardness of Mr Ferguson's profane usage of the form at this juncture in our cultural development. Mr William Jeffrey was right when he recognised in Mr Ferguson a leading spirit in the long overdue effort to deliver the Scottish spirit from its Genevan prison-house. "Bolts and bars do not a prison make"—and it was symptomatic of a great deal that has happened since to find Mr Ferguson disporting himself so defiantly within the strictest limits of his chosen form. He is one of the few poets who have succeeded in producing really comic poetry—poetry that is none the less poetry of a high order, although it contains elements of the ludicrous. And although as sonnets some of his dignified work may rank highest, his most distinctive quality is to be found in others such as the following, which is in his favourite and most frequent vein:—

THE PROPERTY MAN.

Unbilled, unnamed, he never gets a "hand,"  
 He never "takes the curtain," though he plays  
 The augustest part of all, and nightly sways  
 A rod more potent than a wizard's wand;  
 Cities as magic-fair as Samarcand,  
 He summons forth to front the footlight's blaze;  
 His Jovellike nod the hurricane obeys,  
 And the long thunder leaps at his command.  
 Custodian of treasure without end,  
 Impartial arbiter of woe and weal,  
 Bidding the joy-bells chime, the requiem toll . . .  
 He doffs his sceptre when the "tabs" descend,  
 And hurries homeward to a midnight meal—  
 A mug of porter and a sausage roll.

Heterodoxy, if not rank heresy, runs through the whole of Scottish poetry in any way worthy of the name since the

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Reformation. It has always—and necessarily—maintained a guerilla warfare against the mass of national opinion. But Ferguson's poetry is symptomatic of more than that—of the recovery of the Scottish spirit from that blight of Protestantism which has so largely inhibited our poetry. Quite a number of his sonnets—like those of Lord Alfred Douglas—are wholly Catholic : sonnets like "Stella Maris" and "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam." And in others his satire against puritanical humbug and current religiosity is vitriolic. Witness the forthright opening of "Miser-rima,"

"A fair-haired harlot on a city street—  
Her purple sunshade smutched with sludge and rain,"  
with this conclusion :—

"Now she is dead, poor child; and now to-night—  
Forgotten pious spleen and cruel jest,  
The scornful brow, Propriety's cold stare—  
I see her sleeping in the land of light,  
Soft-pillowed on the Magdalenè's breast,  
And no reproach nor any pain is there."

Or the savage but justified satire of "On a Street Preacher," or the polished ridicule of "The Orchard and the Soul."

" . . . in his orchard-garden, trim and neat,  
I saw the Vicar, rubicund and brown,  
Netting his plum-trees as the sun went down—  
A husbandman—but not of wayside wheat."

Scottish Art is at last avenging itself for the outrages perpetrated upon it as a consequence of the Reformation, and the new spirit is nowhere better exemplified perhaps than in Mr Ferguson's "Christ at 'Aladdin,'" which, no doubt, innumerable smug and sanctimonious Scots continue to find blasphemous :—

"The house is crammed, the overture is done;  
The curtain rises o'er the lowered lights;  
Across the stage swing troops of tinselled sprites,  
And round and round the comic policemen run;  
The Widow Twankey dances with her son,  
The debonair Aladdin, brave in tights;  
Within the magic cave what dazzling sights,  
And in the enchanted palace, oh! what fun.

The childish flotsam of the neighbouring streets,  
Long breathless wondering, from the topmost seats  
Sends sudden laughter rippling through the air;  
O marred yet merry little ones, I know,  
The Christ who smiled on children long ago  
Himself hath entered by the gallery stair."

An Aberdeen critic, "A. K.," wrote some years ago in a review of a new edition of "Thyrea": "The sonnet has never been popular with Scottish poets. I do not recollect an instance of a vernacular sonnet. The voluminous Drummond of Hawthornden, it is true, wrote sonnets innumerable, but for two and a half years thereafter the form does not appear in Scottish poetry, and no great Scottish poet employed it to express his thoughts. In more recent years, James Thomson, Andrew Lang, John Barlas, and several others, have written sonnets, some of them distinguished, many of them ephemeral. Of all poetic forms the sonnet, in its true excellence, is most exacting, and since its invention by delle Vigne in the 13th century few of its practitioners have maintained their productions at an equal height of worth. Some have excelled in form, some in thought; yet it is significant that in the former class none has reached the perfection attained over half a century ago by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in England and José Maria de Heredia in France."

This is a confused utterance, all-too-typical of current Aberdeen criticism. What the last sentence means it is difficult to say—and the idea that the sonnet is a more exacting form than other forms is, of course, absurd. But far more than in proportion to the relative stature of Scottish to English or to French literature is Mr Ferguson a sonneteer comparable to the two mentioned. Scotland has given England one of her greatest sonneteers in Lord Alfred Douglas, who, indeed, is the peer of either Heredia or Rossetti, but Ferguson she keeps for herself. Lord Alfred stands in the central tradition of English literature—assimilated to it as no other Scottish writer, save F. V. Branford, has ever succeeded in becoming—but in his intransigence, his experimentalism with new sonnet-content, his use of slang, his ideological tendencies generally, Mr Ferguson belongs to the very different tradition of Scottish literature and is very peculiarly and powerfully a Scot of these times when old inhibitions are being overcome and a new outlook is manifesting itself in the North.

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*"Thyreä and Other Sonnets"* is published by Mr Andrew Melrose, who also publishes *"In the Shadows,"* Mr Ferguson's edition—to which he supplies a preface—of David Gray's sonnets. See also articles on Mr Ferguson by the present writer in *"The New Outlook,"* 1920, and *"The Scottish Chapbook,"* 1922; and by "A. K." in *"Aberdeen Daily Journal,"* March 26, 1921; and by the same writer on him, and Mrs Violet Jacob, under the heading of *"New Scots Poetry"* in the same paper on October 27, 1921.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.

WILLIAM JEFFREY.

When William Jeffrey's poetry first began to appear some five or six years it commanded attention for several reasons. It was not the sort of stuff in subject-matter or in vocabulary—or even in form—that any of Mr Jeffrey's contemporaries were producing: but it was unmistakably, if somewhat unplaceably, reminiscent of such great poets as Milton, Blake, and even Dante. Mr Jeffrey was definitely attempting large utterance through the medium of famous forms at a time when the majority of his contemporaries were concerned with lesser matters and experiments with new forms or with what may be called “various forms of formlessness.” In other words, Mr Jeffrey was apparently entirely outwith, if not oblivious of, the spirit of the age: and endeavouring, however unsuccessfully, to align himself with the mightier figures of the past. He was signally concerned with what John Buchan comments upon as having been so completely lacking in Scottish poetry since the days of Dunbar—“the long perspective and the ‘high translunary things’ of greater art.” He had obviously courage, originality, and lofty ambitions. But to “build the mighty line” calls for more than that. It demands an adequate subsumption, intuitive or otherwise, of all that has gone before. The question was—had Jeffrey that or could he acquire it? And no one who was aware of the cultural background out of which the art-products of contemporary Scotland must emerge would have ventured an affirmative. An insufficiently systematised knowledge or intuition of what

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relevant to the purpose in hand has gone before—an inadequate tradition or sense of tradition—is what has so long delimited and is still (to an at last perceptibly decreasing extent happily) delimiting Scottish artists and restricting them to minor matters and an inferior plane. The antecedent conditions to the production in effective degree of the kind of poetry to which Mr Jeffrey was addressing himself were lacking in Scotland; but the fact that a Scottish poet had emerged who was constrained to address himself to that kind of poetry and none other—and that other compatriots of his were beginning to manifest a reorientation of Scottish genius towards matters of a different nature and an immensely higher plane than those with which it had so long been almost exclusively preoccupied—gave ground for hope, and it became a speculation as to whether Jeffrey would develop the strength of will to contend successfully against an unfriendly environment and make good his deficiencies to such an extent as to enable him to produce work of permanent value along his chosen and most difficult line, whether, perchance, the development of the sympathetic movement would be swift enough to reinforce him from without, or whether in the absence of such timeous support and the lack of adequately determining perceptions on his own part the *lacunae* in his equipment would prove untraversable and engulf his struggling aspirations. Scottish education—our spiritual and social background—does not equip our young people for such high enterprises. We are given a very hit-or-miss and hazardous founding—and great art depends upon adequate foundations. A “half-baked” intelligence cannot address itself to the major tasks of art—and it seemed highly improbable that any one educated in modern Scotland and subjected almost wholly to the influences of contemporary Scottish life, without being specially favoured by wealth or social position, could transmount the innumerable difficulties and reach and maintain himself upon that altitude of the spirit, that vantage-ground over mortality, essential to such work: nor, unless endowed with unlikely attributes of endurance, could such an one plumb the corresponding profounds. The whole tendency of such a society as is to be found in modern Scotland is towards the average, the luke-warm, the mediocre. Any Promethean opposition to the vast tendency of the time in such

a society is a mere "charging of malaria with a bayonet." Contrast the conditions in which any modern Scot is brought up with those under which the young Milton was reared; as Professor Saurat says—"He wrote verses which were considered marvellous in the home circle when he was about ten years old, and he was thenceforward brought up deliberately to be a man of genius. What colossal pride must have been latent in a family where such a thing was accepted as normal, where such an enterprise was carried through successfully, to the complete satisfaction of all participants in this unique conspiracy. . . . In 1632 he retired to Horton where, with the full approval of his father, he devoted himself to deliberate preparation for his high mission. A few years later he wrote to Deodati: 'Do you ask what I am meditating? By the help of Heaven, an immortality of fame.'" It is, I think, safe to conclude that there is no family in Scotland conspiring to-day on behalf of one of its members as Milton's conspired for him: and that there is no retreat in Scotland to which any young man in Scotland has been encouraged or permitted to retire under such conditions as Milton enjoyed at Horton.

One wonders how Milton, if he had been born in humble circumstances, with few facilities of completing his education, in Scotland towards the end of last century, and the necessity of earning his living as a member of the editorial staff of *The Glasgow Evening Times* would have fared—and on the whole I am inclined to think that his greater natural genius if compelled to such conditions could scarcely have produced better work than Jeffrey has done in just such circumstances. Jeffrey is certainly a poet of the Miltonic type, and all things considered, what he has already accomplished redounds as splendidly to his strength of character as it unquestionably reflects the inadequacy of his times to facilitate the best development of his potentialities.

Approaching the problem of Mr Jeffrey from a somewhat different angle, Mr Edwin Muir in "The New Age," apropos *The Wise Men Come to Town*, said: "He is a mystical poet: he strives for great effects at a time when almost everybody else is trying to secure neat little ones; he is, in other words, at direct variance with his age, completely out of the current of his time. The natural thing for young writers at present (I set it down simply as a

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fact) is to distrust greatness, to be impatient of greatness, as if in some way it had let them down. They strive for quite a number of things, and for the truth, no doubt, among these! but they do not attempt greatness of utterance. Mr Jeffrey does. He had better be careful. He had better be careful, for if disillusion, hatred, cynicism, are part of the portion of the present generation of poets, there must be a necessity of some kind in them; and if Mr Jeffrey has escaped them he has been either very fortunate or very blind. The volume proves that he has been very fortunate; but it proves also, I think, that he relies too much on his good-fortune. His utterance at its best is large utterance: but it is careless utterance, even uncritical utterance. It is never the utterance of a minor poet, but it is often the utterance not of a poet at all. I say this reluctantly, for Mr Jeffrey has the promise of great gifts. He has vastly more abundance than any of the Georgians; but for lack of discipline and of a more severe technique it only carries half the way. But having important things to say he should at least have as much sincerity and conviction in his voice as the poets who have hardly anything to say at all: yet very often he has not. It is not natural endowment which fails him, but discipline, and once more discipline. He has a fine capacity for striking out exact and vivid phrases, and that is as good a proof as any of genuine imagination: but he is frequently content to accept the second-best. . . . What displeases one in Mr Jeffrey's poetry is a frequent too-clear echo from the past, an original one cannot name, but which on that very account is not less displeasing. What Mr Jeffrey chiefly needs, it seems to me, is a more severe questioning of his inspiration. As it is, the book is a remarkable work."

In these remarks Mr Muir pierces to the root not only of the trouble with Jeffrey's work, but the trouble with Scottish arts and letters as a whole; what we are suffering from is an utter lack of tradition, a want of standards. That is why it must be a close coterie movement that will redeem our position, if anything can. Referring to what Mr Muir had said, and writing of Mr Jeffrey's later poem, *The Nymph*, I expressed the view that he had profited by Mr Muir's advice. "He has attained to a greater clarity, a deeper sense of congruity," I wrote. "This purification has entailed no diminution in the 'speed' of his

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work, that sense of 'first-time' success which was the notable characteristic of his previous poems. Otherwise put, Mr Jeffrey's previous visioning was like that of a man possessing, very intermittently, 'normal' eyesight in the Shavian sense, and the rest of the time suffering in rapid succession from a choice selection of common ophthalmic ills. In *The Nymph* for the first time in a poem of any length, he maintains normal vision throughout. It is 'all of a piece.' It places Mr Jeffrey indisputably in the first flight of our younger British poets." Here is the closing passage of "The Nymph":—

"The cavalcade's celestial horde  
Comes nearer, nearer, nearer;  
Fiercely the chariot shines, and clearer  
Than heaven's lightnings dragged from rest,  
Or a thousand stars in one bulk prest.  
Majestic, terrible, fiery in speed  
Apollo passes . . . He pays no heed  
To that weak pillar of white flesh  
The waves have caught as in a mesh.  
He passes westward over the hills;  
And as his turning axle fills  
The air with dying thunder, prone  
Upon the sand the nymph lies lone;  
Of strength and joy she is bereft,  
From hope her heart is ever cleft,  
And now the breeze around her sighs  
And soft waves close her fear-filled eyes  
While from a wood, to outwit death,  
A satyr runs with panting breath."

By the time Jeffrey had published his first book of poems he had at least a clear realisation of the need for one of the objects which must be part and parcel of any Scottish renaissance movement—in his own words, the necessity of liberating the genius of Scotland from "the Genevan prison house"—and an appropriate detestation of the "kailyaird school" and of that kind of literary mosaic-work which has so often been substituted for poetry by members of the Glasgow Ballad Club and the like. And he rapidly developed to the realisation of his "direction" embodied in the following passage from an article on "Blind Georgians" which he contributed to *The Scottish Nation*:—"Unfortunately many of the Georgian poets regard the poet, as being one who describes

things in rhythmic language, a sort of glorified descriptive journalist who wears coloured spectacles; or indeed as one who takes a Dionysian Cook's Tour of the sensations . . . the Georgian poets have evinced fine powers for associative musical thought only, and little for the energies of poetic imagination. They have worked with material things: not with the baseless winds of starry vision. . . . Such poetry lacks vitality and creativeness, and is of little import to our present age, which needs writers who are well-springs of living water. Even Abercrombie, perhaps the biggest of the Georgians, whom sky-gazers had once thought to be a comet of wondrous portent, now makes but a lanthorn-splash in the night. In his poem *Ryton Firs* he introduces many lines about the mole, telling how it takes burrowing jaunts abroad, and does all manner of remarkable things. That is not the method of true poetry. I can find all I desire to know about the mole in a naturalist's book. But if a man tells me how he saw in a vision a mole burrow into the earth, meet a skull, and converse with that skull about human fate, time, and God, then I should say that that man is uttering potential poetry. . . . In his apology Hardy calls upon the poet and the saint to do battle once again for beauty and truth. Shall we turn to him a deaf ear? We in the North here, where many, many hills are gloomy as Egdon Heath, are not deaf of ear; and we may perhaps relieve that over-striding Colossus of the Georgians of his task of pondering upon the balancings of the clouds and upon frustrated aims of life. Let us at least attempt the noble task."

Elsewhere in *A Note on Yeats* he wrote:—

"Those passages of Shakespeare or Dante which are the greatest are also the most easily understood—provided, of course, the reader be naturally moved to poetry . . . I have a fancy that the poet, when feeding the purest flame of his inspiration should employ only those images which are of an immemorial and eternal nature. Such images are the naked human body, earth, air, fire, and water, the elements of life and matter."

While in his later work Jeffrey has overcome many of the inequalities of his earlier poems and achieved a finer congruity and clarity, it must be observed that he has latterly increasingly restricted himself to minor forms. I would fain hope that this is a case of *reculer à mieux sauter*



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—because, if not, it must be attributed to the power of an adverse environment to delimit his creative efforts. In the first flush of his inspiration he turned to blank verse and to great subjects demanding long poems—in this he undoubtedly displayed the true disposition of his genius. It will be singularly unfortunate if he is now disposed to subject his efforts to the Procrustean bed of contemporary journalistic requirements in verse. It is at all events the case that his most finished efforts are all short poems; and that in many of his short poems he harps on the same strain and reintroduces identical imagery to such an extent that it loses its imaginative force, while behind it, sense—I do not mean mere meaning, but vital significance and genuine creative effect—is often to seek. These short poems, nevertheless, place him in the first rank of modern Scottish poets, and several of them will be indispensable in any future anthology of Scottish poetry—yet his main interest, his outstanding promise, does not lie in that direction. He is only secondarily, however exquisitely it may transpire in the long run, a lyricist. He will miss his true metier if he allows any consideration to tempt him away from concentrated effort to “move the noble numbers” which were his initial prepossession. Rossetti declared that “sheer brains were a pre-requisite of any work of great art” and many of Jeffrey’s shorter poems, however interesting and delightful in themselves, are of a kind that suggests that he is dallying dangerously with the path of least resistance—that he is not applying himself as he ought to be applying himself, in scorn of such smaller successes, to the “bloc resistant.” Only unremitting intellectual effort will enable him to realise his great potentialities—he must be on the alert to allow no other process to substitute itself for fundamental brain work as the dominant element in his output. Words for words’ sake—mere repetition—will not avail him—and too often his poems of late have a hallucinatory quality, a dream-like inconsequence, which—whatever may be said for it—is not one of the elements that go to build up great fabrics of poetry. His symbols are not moving to the construction of a world of thought or feeling of their own: they are falling like the debris of some “*monde interieure*” which has disintegrated before it could be described in its entirety.

But whether Jeffrey succeeds or not—and external circumstance is unfortunately likely to have the determining

say in that—in bending the great bow and shooting the inerrable arrows to which his strength should be dedicated, he has already enriched our poetry with numbers, which, if they are unrelated pipings and not movements in a complete harmony of creation, are beyond question among the most remarkable products of Scottish genius. Of his work, it may be asked, as Jethro Bithell asked of Peter Baum's: "What mathematician shall reduce to plain terms, what poet's soul shall fail to understand," such a vision as this:—

I saw an old man sitting still  
Upon a granite rock;  
There were no lines upon his face  
That did not mock.  
I asked a furrow on his cheek  
What its decision was;  
And shrilly like a reed it said,  
"All love doth pass."  
I asked a furrow on his brow  
What had mislaid its trust;  
And like a wind in March it said,  
"All thought is dust."  
And then I gazed with courage bold  
Into his snow-white eye;  
And lo! God and His chariots  
Like swift red deer passed by!

Or, again, "to what category shall the critic of literature assign the heroic landscape," which he calls "Nocturne":

Thou shalt see, my love,  
At some future hour  
Thine own sweet planet  
And the dawn in flower.  
Now through the darkness  
Of turning spheres  
Behold what a marvel  
In heaven appears!  
Where the outermost curves  
Of heaven lie  
The untameable lions  
Of God go by!

Jeffrey has published:—

"*Prometheus Returns*"; "*The Wise Men Come to Town*" (Gowans and Gray); "*The Nymph*" (Porpoise Press Broadsheets).

## CHAPTER NINETEEN.

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There is a wide-spread idea that Scotland has been especially rich in songstresses. This is not so: and those we have had have been, as in other countries, almost without exception definitely inferior in accomplishment and not markedly different in tendency to the fourth or fifth rank of their brother-poets. Few have risen above the merest mediocrity at all: and those who have generally by only one poem or at most two or three poems. The total output of our poetesses of any quality at all has been exceedingly slight. The position to which women were so long relegated accounts, of course, to a very large extent for this; and consequently one would expect to find a different state of affairs manifesting itself in these days of comparative sex-equality, and of feminism—and *one* does, indeed, find it. Scotland has a group of songstresses to-day of far greater consequence than any of their predecessors: and the women poets—while the best of them produce work very different in content from that of their male contemporaries—compare as a whole very fairly with the men poets. Two living poetesses stand head and shoulders above all the others—these are Muriel Stuart and Rachel Annand Taylor. Jessie Annie Anderson, a personality of much greater compass and more abundance, only falls below them in artistic force and finish. A succession of fairly sincere and individual artists such as Christine Orr, Janet Murray, Mabel Christian Forbes, M. E. Graham, Bertha Cruickshanks, Hilary Staples, and Brenda Murray Draper come at varying intervals behind.

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Mrs Violet Jacob heads the older section of a different category specialising in the Vernacular, in which Miss Anderson has also done excellent work, while the younger section of it is undoubtedly headed by Miss Marion Angus, to whose work I shall recur.

It is amusing to recall, in view of such a group, that Mr D. T. Wood, writing in *The Thistle* of February, 1914, could remark that "even the lyre of Jeanie Morrison, who earned Whittier's praise, does not seem to have been taken up by any Scotswoman who is desirous of adding another name to the list of Scotland's women poets." Jeanie Morrison, forsooth!

In my opinion, Muriel Stuart is the greatest woman-poet Scotland has so far produced. She is less superficially Scottish than Rachel Annand Taylor. She never uses the Vernacular or Scottish subjects and settings: the latter frequently does—and is, to my mind, best when she does. Her other work is too mannered and Italianate. But there is no attitudinising about Muriel Stuart's poetry. It is blazingly forthright and sincere—an irresistible tide that carries away the bulwarks of conventional female reserve. Mr Herbert Palmer, in a recent contra-Georgian article in *Vox Studentium* (Geneva) singled her out as perhaps the greatest woman poetess writing in English to-day. I think he is right. Who shall be put against her? Both Rose Macaulay and Helen Parry Eden are definitely minor poets: Edith Sitwell has a unique stylistic interest, and her work is extraordinarily vivid and witty—but as someone said, her work is like "devilled almonds" and certainly she presents the extras to a repast, not the repast itself. I can go over all the others—but none of them have Muriel Stuart's amplitude and sweep: she alone, too, is writing poetry which, whatever its faults, is almost always on the major plane. And in content, if not in its more obvious concomitants, she is far more modern than most of her sisterhood in Scotland. Her power derives from her complete individuality of perception and her forthrightness of utterance. She stoops to no trimming or concealing. Her concern is predominantly with the innermost emotions of Woman in the typical predicaments of her sex, and here she regains a directness of statement that has nowhere in Europe been more singularly to seek than in modern Scotland—a recovery relating her work anew to her greatest predecessors in Scot-

tish Poetry and, by emphasising the gulf between her and the soul-destroying sentimentalities of the Kailyaird School, revelatory of her especial significance at the present juncture of Scottish letters.

It is particularly interesting at the present moment to note that in her first book she anticipated one of the most significant characteristics of subsequent Scottish verse—the emergence of a new mysticism and the stressing of the Christ-motif. This reveals her effective relationship with the most significant of our younger poets, and the whole “becoming” re-orientation of our literature, just as her other qualities as I have indicated mark her as at complete variance with the inhibiting Puritanism with which the Renaissance movement is openly contending all alone the line and demonstrate her fundamental relationship with the Auld Makars. It is easy to understand on both counts why her poetry is comparatively little-known and little-appreciated in contemporary Scotland: but Posterity will put that right.

“How knowest thou Christ?” I answered.

“By the thorn.”

“Nay, but the thorn tree grows in every wood.

For any brow forsworn!”

The other whispered: “Thou art tempted here  
For my sake,” but the beggar’s voice came fleet  
As pain: “Three crosses did that hillside bear,  
Not Christ alone hath wounded hands and feet;  
Dost thou believe

That every pierced hand stretched to thee is Christ?

Shall not some thief impenitent deceive . . . .”

The quality of that—the plane of its utterance, the acuteness and freedom of its ratiocination, the profundity of the issues it raises, the blend of beauty and wit and dramatic daring and deliberate simplicity of statement—is undeniable: but it does not do justice to Miss Stuart. It is torn from its context in a long and closely woven poem. All her best work is in long poems—too long for reproduction here, too subtly knit to be dis severed in quotation. But some of her single lines show her power:

“A stopped stream smelled of Death.”

“A thin hail ravened against the door of dark.”

“To feel the mighty stars, streaming to meet me.”

“And no dew lies in the dead Morning’s eyes.”

“Christ’s hand that tips the blue-rimmed porridge bowl!”

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This last has scarcely been glimpsed in Scotland since the days of the old Makars, but our vision of Him is renewed as delightfully, as humanly, in Miss Stuart's work as in John Ferguson's sonnets.

Writing of Miss Stuart and her work in "The Scottish Chapbook" of November, 1922, I said:—"She is our Scottish equivalent of Rene Vivien—of Else Lasker-Schüler, that flame of chaotic passion, consuming and consumed, of whom Peter Hille has said that she is "the black Swan of Israel—a Sappho whose world has yawned asunder"—of Agnes Miegel—of Jean Dominique. "Hectic?"—But as someone wrote when a similar criticism was levelled against Francis Thompson: "He revels indeed in 'orgaic imageries' and revelry implies excess. But when excess is an excess of strength, the debauch a debauch of beauty, who can condemn or even regret it? Would we had a few more poets who could exceed in such imagery as this!" . . . Our Scottish "critics" have not hastened to acclaim Miss Stuart. Their praises are bestowed elsewhere. Annie S. Swan can write: "I think you possess a fine poetic feeling." The Rt. Hon. Ian Macpherson: "I am glad you are publishing a new edition of your poems. Their homely charm, simplicity, fidelity to life and gracefulness have always appealed to me. Many of them arouse memories which are a priceless possession." Sir Harry Lauder: "Let me say how much I appreciate your writing. Your verses in your mither tongue are grand and simple and most effective, and should be widely read." Sir William Robertson Nicoll, the late General Booth (just before he died!) and many others in similar strain. All these appreciations not of the work of a poetess such as Miss Stuart, needless to say, but of the unutterably wretched effusions of a sycophantic lady, of a type almost as numerous in Scotland to-day as litterateurs of the kind from whom I have been quoting, the quality of whose work is fairly illustrated by such a passage as this:—

"Don't make my life so very bright;  
My eyes should blinded be—  
Give me the sunshine after rain  
That sets earth's fragrance free—  
For balmy showers refresh the flowers,  
And spread their fragrance wide;  
So free my life by sun and shower  
From arrogance and pride,"



or this, composed on the death of Edward VII.,

"A king of greatest credit and renown,  
Who kept unspotted, shining pure, his crown  
Has crossed the Bar, and laid his sceptre down.  
In Heaven he reigns and wears another crown  
His mother, waiting at the other side,  
With outstretched arms, and eyes fixed on the tide—  
'Come home at last! My well-beloved son!  
With honours crowned and duty bravely done.'"

Ashamed and impotent, in the face of such preposterous "poetry" and praise, the handful of living Scots who do know what poetry is and recognise to some extent the significance of Miss Stuart may well say to her, in the words of her own poem to Charles Bridges in her first volume "Christ at Carnival and Other Poems"—

"Thou knowest at what cost  
Thy sleep was taken on those awful hills—  
What thou hast gained, and lost;  
Thou knowest, too, if what thou art fulfils  
The pledge of what thou wast.  
And if all compensates the poet's wreath  
That wounds the brow beneath."

*Muriel Stuart has published:—"Christ at Carnival, and Other Poems" (Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 1916); Poems (Methuen, 1918); Poems (Heinemann, 1922).*

## CHAPTER TWENTY.

### HUGH ROBERTON AND THE MUSICAL FESTIVAL MOVEMENT.

"When the Glasgow Musical Festival started in 1911," wrote Mr Roberton in a recent article, "there were pessimists who gave it a couple of years to burn itself out. There were optimists, too, but none daring enough to predict the position as it is to-day. If we who were in at the beginning had been told that within 14 years Scotland would have 32 Festivals, representing at least 60,000 competitors, we should have smiled. But it is so. Glasgow was not the first Festival. Aberdeen has that honour, although even this must be qualified, for the Co-operative Movement had been working along Competitive Festival lines for some years before. Glasgow, however, may claim to be the spear-head of the movement. In the early days, when Glasgow was still working on a bank overdraft, her promoters went forth spreading the gospel in Renfrewshire, Dumbartonshire, the Borders, Stirlingshire, Perth, Dumfries, Inverness, Elgin, Lanark, Wishaw, Cambuslang, Wick, the Monklands—these and others all owe their origin, one way or another to Glasgow. More, the British Federation which links up the whole movement is largely a Glasgow conception. It superseded the old Festivals Association, a useful but less democratic body, which up to 1920 had existed to co-ordinate the work. That body was largely English in character and outlook and rightly so, for it was in England that the movement as we know it to-day originated. When the movement started here we had the advantage of English experience extending over a genera-

tion to draw upon. And we profited. Unlike England we have never had to go through what might be called a pot-hunting or prize-hunting period. In the Scottish movement the educative rather than the competitive side has always been emphasised. To-day there is no prize-money of any kind at any affiliated Scottish Festival, and many of them have even discarded medals. Not the prize but the honour is the thing."

By an amusing chance alongside Mr Robertson's article there appeared one on "The Dilemma of British Music" by our foremost musical critic, Ernest Newman, in the course of which he found it necessary to say that "on the whole I cannot help thinking that, in spite of all our musical activity the average Briton of to-day knows less, at first hand, of what is going on in the musical world than his grandfather did. The situation is a curious and disturbing one. It means that certain contemporary movements will pass completely away before the average man has had a chance to become acquainted with them." [This was what I was driving at in my article on Mr Francis G. Scott when I stressed the need for eliding certain stages altogether in the composition of Scottish music if the products of a Scottish Renaissance in this respect were to be other than absurdly anachronistic, and this is why I rank the *Forscherblick* quality of genius, the divination of tendency, as the paramount desideratum in Scottish mentality to-day]. "For this singular state of affairs there are no doubt several reasons. The improvement in orchestral playing and the rise of the virtuoso conductor inevitably lead to a certain standardisation of the repertory. No one cares to risk his reputation on the production of a difficult new work that cannot be given adequate rehearsal. As regards the smaller forms we have to admit a breach between the generality of new composers and the generality of great performers. The latter prefer the old music because its beauty of line gives them opportunities to display their special art, which is founded on a tradition of linear beauty. It is almost impossible, for instance, to get the great violinists to take up the newest violin music. As one of them put it to me once: 'A Viotti concerto may not be first-rate music, but at any rate I can express myself, my conception of beauty, through it; whereas such a work as Bartok's second violin

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sonata, interesting as it may be in many ways, is not only alien to my ideas of beauty, but seems to me alien to the spirit of the violin.' The pianists say much the same thing; the greatest singers will not touch the newest songs. What is the way out of this *impasse*?"

Whatever may be said for the Musical Festival Movement on other grounds than those of purely musical interests, it cannot be gainsaid that its whole tendency is to prolong and to worsen this *impasse*—that as a condition of its existence it is necessarily bogged in a very narrow and—not stationary, but as the movement extends, actually contracting—repertory far below the level of contemporary creativity in all the kinds of music concerned. Its educational value in one direction by no means compensates for its anti-educational tendency in another—it may be developing thousands of executants, but it is certainly widening the gulf between the progressive creator and the public—if only by interesting the mass of those who would normally constitute the musical public in their own fiddling little abilities as singers or players in such a way as to make them prefer to emulate each other instead of listening to really great artists and trying to understand and enjoy really great music. The logical conclusion to the tendency is a "musical" parallel to that state of society in which everybody lives by taking in everybody else's washing. This is not confined to music, of course. We have the same thing in poetry. Hundreds and perhaps thousands of doggerel-mongers have reached the stage of being far more interested in their own and in kindred productions than in real poetic effort and, regarding the latter as "highbrowism" and alien to their ideas of beauty and, indeed, alien to what they regard as the spirit of poetry, they have banded themselves together into an Empire Poetry Association and live by buying each other's brochures of verse and anthologies in which they can appear by paying a guinea a poem or thereabouts. This is mediocrity on the offensive with a vengeance; and raises big questions as to culture and democracy, Socialism and the Servile State, and so forth. To revert to the dilemma of British music, the only way out Mr Newman sees is *via* "mechanical" music—gramophone, piano-player, wireless—despite all their defects, and he contends that the

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purveyors of these are not enterprising enough. "They will tell me, no doubt," he says, "that they know their own business best, but I cannot help thinking that if they would leave the accepted things alone for a little while, and make it possible for the man who is curious about Stravinsky and Schonberg and Bartok and other much-discussed composers of the day to hear their music instead of only reading the critics' wrangles about it, it would pay them." Personally, I have no reason to suppose that it would. I think it is highly improbable. The fact that even Glasgow has not got the length of organising a branch of the Contemporary Music Society does not conduce to expectations of large sales for reproductions of the works in question. Nor do I think it at all likely that any of the purveyors in question will make the experiment. And yet to resist this strangling circumscription of the repertory—to get away from this mania of imagining that increased volume of mediocre competence is educational progress—to reverse the overwhelming preference for quantity to quality—to get back to really musical considerations and away from these Yankee nostrums of uplift and mass-music and being "a' Jock Tamson's Bairns"—to realise the negligibility of everything else in comparison with that contemporary creativity which is moving forward into the unknown from the furthest frontiers musical genius has yet reached and to endeavour in our day and generation to subsume the achievements of the past and move, however little, beyond them—these are the requirements of our musical salvation. And they are not to be found in the Musical Festival Movement. The multiplication of mutual admiration societies—the alarming increase of brotherly love—the devastating piety and platitudinarianism of all such manifestations of the inferiority complex of popularly-educated mass-mediocrity in full blast are diametrically opposed to, and irreconcilable with, the interests of Art, and therefore, if Art has any value, ultimately harmful to the masses subjected to their influence and subversive of whatever latent expressive or appreciative faculties they have. I fully share Dr Adolph Weissman's view that the growth of middle-class culture has choked the sources of inspiration—in certain directions. At the same time it is true that apart from the increase of economic lets and hindrances and the increasing unsuitability of the surrounding cultural

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atmosphere, a man born to compose will compose whether the masses are sufficiently well-educated to appreciate his work or not, and the question of whether the next great creative phase is, as Dr Weissman will have it, to annul the existing divorce between cultured art and folk art will probably not concern him. But I am at one with another writer who says that "if the *general* interests of art can only be served by one of two things—bringing genius down to the folk or lifting the folk more nearly to the level of genius—by all means let us get on with the lifting. It will be worth while if its only achievement is the hastening of genius's natural reward." But once the horde of adjudicators of one kind and another are satisfied it does not seem to me that there is likely to be in Scotland much of the reward left over—even in the shape of opportunity—for mere genius. The whole movement is rather like the Socialist Art Circle, which lays far more stress on the fact that such and such a perpetration is the spare-time product of a self-educated billposter's labourer than on any cognisable artistic criterion. Defective opportunity is erected into a canon. Multatuli has well said that the opinion of one incompetent person is of as much value as the opinion of a million incompetent people, and Mr Robertson and his associates need to be reminded that to evolve a multitude of singers and players, all of whom are comparatively mediocre at the best, is no artistic benefit. "The calm reading of a passage of Scripture by one whose lit face is eloquence itself, or the sprightly saying of 'Up the Airy Mountain' by a wee bobbed-hair girl, or the singing of 'O Saviour Sweet' by a 'through-ither laddie,'" have no more to do with musical progress than 'the flowers that bloom in the spring tra, la.' Tosh of that type is the true give-away of the movement—it is known by the ideas it keeps company with.

The whole business of music in Scotland is in a deplorable condition. Musical Festival education is an exceedingly shallow and superficial thing at best. Mr D. A. Anderson, President of the Dundee Musical Festival, has recently written—and surely the second sentence is a masterpiece of unconscious humour and a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole position—"Music is essentially universal and is also most democratic and human. The mes-



sage-boy, as he whistles or sings on his rounds, provides ample evidence of all three, and every encouragement ought to be afforded for the extension and development of such ordinary gifts which are common to all. No unusual gifts are required, and there is no reason why the refining influences and advantages of music should not be enjoyed by every class of people." That is true—except that in His divine wisdom God did not make everybody anything like equally accessible to these influences or disposed to take equal advantage of their opportunities. The whole field of music lies open to everybody—who will put himself to the trouble of going over it—and his achievements need only be limited by the extent to which his industry fails to make good his essential natural limitations which even the Festival Movement cannot enable him to transcend. The Musical Festival Movement puts a premium on the vast mass who will not put themselves to the trouble of learning any more than is necessary to impress audiences who know less than they do themselves—aids and abets them in the ostrich-like policy by which they ignore everything they cannot easily acquire and fit in with their pre-conceived ideas, and imagine that they have become musical by shutting their eyes to almost everything really worth bothering about—encourages them to value their ordinary gifts to such an extent that they become oblivious—or remain indifferent—to the extraordinary gifts of the few who alone are capable of carrying on the great traditions founded by a like few, but for whom the mob could never have reached their present level of dangerous complacency. Education—not demagoguery—is the only solution: and so far as music is concerned in Scotland at anyrate anti-educational influences, in all but the narrow sense which concerns the merely executive development of great numbers not even a perceptible minority of whom will ever reach a level justifying what is being lost in other directions, have for the time being the field to themselves. Our fundamental difficulty—explaining our lack of genuine musical progression in a distinctively Scottish sense on the one hand, and our vulnerability on the other, to "Festivalitis" and similar diseases—is our entire absence of tradition in this country, our lack of perspective and sense of proportion. Imagine Eisteddfodau and Musical Festivals in France. Imagine the French reaction to such a devastating pheno-

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menon as community singing. All these things are the symptoms and stigmata of that condition best known as "half-bakedness." They are the antithesis of every tendency or aspiration that is artistically valid or salutary. And they press most hardly on the creative artist. That is why these things in Scotland and elsewhere are run mainly, if not wholly, on other people's music or on atavistic and infantilist "resurrected" stuff of our own.

The low standard of criticism in Scotland is largely responsible. The motto of it seems to be—praise everybody: no adverse comments. Pupils always do the utmost credit to their teachers. Every local singer or amateur actor or organist or violinist invariably does full credit to himself or herself. No doubt they do—whatever that means. The leading Scottish critic is perhaps Mr Percy Gordon, of the *Glasgow Herald*. Here is an example of *Glasgow Herald* musical criticism well up to its average quality (the italicisations are mine)—"The current issue of *The Scottish Musical Magazine* contains in the editorial section some rather pessimistic utterances regarding music in Scotland. They arise, *curiously enough*, from a reference to the recent institution of a lectureship in music at Aberdeen University . . . the institution of the Competitive Festival is *the greatest thing that has been done for the cause of music in our history*. The writer of the article goes on to say that 'what Scotland is indeed badly in need of is something that will stir her up in no uncertain manner. A 'music week' organised on the right lines should certainly do so—but it must be done thoroughly and comprehensively!' An earthquake would stir up Scotland in no uncertain manner, but I am no believer in the power of its aesthetic equivalent to do much towards furthering any branch of Art. Art is long, and while a music week, whenever it may be held, will not be without benefit, it would be wiser to measure our progress in the art by 'Music Decades.' And I think it hardly fair that the writer should stigmatise as 'merely a trade boom' the music week which is being organised by the Scottish Music Merchants' Association. As purveyors of *all things necessary* to the study and enjoyment of music, the music merchants have a definite and very important contribution to make to the advancement of the

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art in Scotland, and an inevitable outcome of an organised attempt to boom their trade will surely be *improved business methods, from which the consumer will benefit.*"

Anyone who does not instantly "tumble" to all the iniquitous and excruciating inwardness of that paragraph should cease forthwith to imagine that he has the slightest capacity for gauging the position and prospects of music in Scotland. To quote a recent *Dundee Advertiser* review "the faithful bonniness of it is enough to make us feel wae." So far as music in Scotland is concerned, one is inclined to be like the saxophone player who let the whole thing slide.

And imagine the pessimism of the *Scottish Musical Magazine* of all papers. It is what *Morning Rays* is to the *Hibbert Journal* to any other musical periodical I know at home or abroad.

Of the excellence of the Orpheus Choir—and Mr Robertson's genius as a choir conductor—there are no two opinions: but the limitations referred to by Ernest Newman must be kept in mind—and the "Orpheus" takes no risk and never fails to throw a suitable sop to the "gods" in the way of "The Road to the Isles" as a wind-up or something of that kind. Neither the choir as such, nor the individual members of it, are in the least likely to do anything for the genuine advancement of Scottish music. At the same time, while the precise character of Mr Robertson's special abilities must be recognised and found to reside in a narrow technical gift unsupported by any wide or really good knowledge of music or fundamental artistic integrity, it cannot be gainsaid that he is a remarkable and forceful personality and has rendered notable social services if the direction these take reacts detrimentally on true creativity in some ways. A long, fully particularised and very laudatory article on him by H. Orsmond Anderton appeared in "Musical Opinion" for October, 1921, and while I agree with much that it contains—bearing in mind the reservations that I have set down and the fact that once he steps beyond his own proper, and very narrow, sphere Mr Robertson's enterprising figure is all too apt to disguise itself impenetrably in shoddy or even, at times, in sanctimoniousness, demonstrating that his is essentially a commonplace mind apart from his choral flair—I must dissent from the pervading idea that a kind heart takes the place of a thorough education

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or that social sympathies and a humanitarian outlook excuse a lack of artistic rigour and an occasional playing to the gallery. But perhaps it is inevitable in Scotland that a musical movement must have an evangelical flavour (and an "elder") and that one who strays so far from the straight and narrow path as to occupy himself mainly with singing and playing should insist in season and out of season that cultural considerations are to his mind entirely subordinate to social service and uplift in general. The unfortunate thing about Mr Roberton is that there is no expedient pretence about all this. His tongue is insufficiently in his cheek: and he takes himself far too seriously for the wrong things as a rule.

*See also article "The Glasgow Orpheus Choir," by Harvey Grace in "The Musical Times" of May 1st, 1925.*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE.

### R. F. POLLOCK AND THE ART OF THE THEATRE

Within a stone's throw of the Covent Garden Opera House, one of London's largest places of entertainment, the world's smallest theatre is to be opened shortly—in an old hay-loft. It will seat only 96 persons and, under the name of "The Gate Theatre Salon," is to be run pretty much on the lines of a proprietary club. The project is under the direction of Mr Peter Godfrey, who explains that the theatre is intended to be a nursery for the "Communists of the art world." "Pure art" is the object of the promoters. Mr Godfrey is of the opinion that the nightly audiences will not as a matter of fact exceed about twenty-five. I would fain gather from this that he intends to debar the merely curious and confine admission to those who are seriously interested. "The Gate Theatre Salon" may profitably follow the lead, too, of Vsevolod Mierhold, the most iconoclastic of contemporary Moscow producers, in dispensing with a curtain and having the actors appear in their ordinary work-a-day clothes. I do not know whether there are ninety-six Glaswegians sufficiently interested in the problem of creating a distinctively Scottish drama to enable the Gate Theatre Salon method to be followed there: but I am perfectly certain that it is only by some such means that the task can be carried through. It may be necessary to make concessions to secure the requisite number to launch a little Experimental Theatre movement. Projects such as Mierhold's and even Godfrey's may be too drastic for the *douce intelligentsia* of Glasgow. On the

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other hand the problem of creating a distinctively Scottish drama is one that may well engage the minds of all who can appreciate a first-rate intellectual opportunity bristling with difficulties of every imaginable kind. Whether the necessary number of enthusiasts can be rallied round him, or not, Mr R. F. Pollock's significance in relation to Scottish arts and affairs at the present moment is precisely due to his realisation that this is the *via sola* of Scots Drama. He is the only Scotsman I know with the necessary flair and the necessary knowledge of Contemporary European Drama to create, if he is given the opportunity and suitable dramatic texts, a new theatrical technique in accordance with distinctively Scottish psychology. The whole trend of his mind is at variance with the point of view of the Scottish National Players in their approach to the matter. Three years ago the present writer wrote, *apropos* the announcement that during the previous two years 150 Scottish plays had been submitted to the Scottish National Theatre Society, of which 17 had been found fit for production and 4 were then awaiting production, that "this spate of alleged plays is indicative of nothing but the spread of *cacoethes scribendi*. Even the small percentage deemed worthy of production may have had commercial possibilities but were certainly utterly devoid of literary significance. Technically nothing has been done to differentiate Scottish drama from English. It is at once pitiful and amusing to read that this precious Society is determined to prove that there is a distinct Scottish drama on the strength of such plays as Mr Neil Grant's. A Scottish drama cannot be created in that way. This so-called 'movement' is doomed by shallowness of purpose, the absence of research, conscience, and imaginative integrity, and the mistake of thinking that it is possible to secure a Scottish drama as a mere offshoot of the contemporary English stage in its most ephemeral and trivial aspects; a freak of hybridisation, resembling the stoneless plum, is all that can be so secured." About the same time, the Hon. R. Erskine of Marr, in the *Glasgow Herald*, in words as applicable to Scots drama in English or the Vernacular as in Gaelic, was pointing out that: "There has come down to us no example of Gaelic literary talent in true dramatic form,



and such modern plays as have been written do not support the notion that the authors of them are conversant with any stage, save perhaps the English, or are well-grounded in ancient Gaelic literature. We must, therefore, set aside these modern Gaelic essays at playwriting, and, firm in the conviction that, for a variety of reasons into which it is not necessary here to penetrate, these are not those that should come, we must look for others. . . . I mean, of course, such a choice as a true Gaelic craftsman would make, who knows the history of his race and literature, is conversant with the psychology of his people, and has a sound knowledge of the European stage, especially with the dramatic writings of those countries the genius of whose inhabitants is near to our own, such, for example as France, Spain, or Italy." Alter the word Gaelic to Scottish, and that sentence describes the equipment Mr R. F. Pollock is bringing to this task. He is the first Scottish producer who has manifested a dynamic realisation of the pre-requisites of a Scots drama *sui generis*. In this respect he unfortunately remains in advance of the playwrights: but that he should be revolving the specific problems of a Scots theatrecraft in anticipation, and that a line of criticism such as his, supported by technical experience and the will-to-produce, should be manifesting itself against the policy of the Scottish National Players, are matters of prime moment at this juncture of the movement towards a Scottish drama.

In the course of an article on the subject of "Scots Stage Production," Mr Pollock observes that "it may be that not until we evolve a new dramatic form of expression in setting, gesture, and intonation will the capabilities of dramatist and actor produce distinctive virile result. . . . There must be a definite first step, so let us dispense with conventional scenery. Instead, let us be frankly negative and use simple dark drapings. That is at least sincere. . . . It is characteristic of the Scot that he thinks a lot but says little. This feature is seen in the diversity of intention that may be signified by the word meaning broadly 'Yes,' but spelt phonetically 'Ughugh.' Facial expression and gesture are used so aptly that a conversation may sometimes be continued largely by use of this word or its synonym 'Aye.'"

Were an experimental Scots little theatre begun—and twenty-five enthusiasts could do it in Glasgow if twenty-

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five can do it for London—its repertory might very well start with a play confined to one word in that way. It would at least be an adequate departure from the sort of thing that has hitherto called itself a Scottish play, and would far better deserve the title. From that point the movement might very well develop—educating its playwrights as it went along by imposing upon them a method of collaboration with the producers and the players with mere suggestions instead of concrete plays to work from—into attempts to adapt, with additions giving the material to hand contemporary gagging, allegorical effects and so forth, some of the extraordinarily dramatic work of Dougal Graham, the Skellat Bellman of Glasgow (the nearest thing to a Scots drama yet evolved) and some of his fellow “flying stationers,” or to expand into full-size *divertissements* some of the splendid suggestions latent in the games and nursery tales to be found in Robert Chambers’ “Popular Rhymes of Scotland” and elsewhere. The current type of Scots drama, and stage conceptions of Scottish character, like the Scotch comedian in the music-halls, can only be supplanted by an effective use of the *vis comica* latent in Scottish psychology. Genuine manifestations of it will make short work of such “wut.” It is not for nothing that Mierhold’s plays are usually satires on old Russian life and literature and burlesques of its masterpieces. This is the line that must necessarily be followed in Scotland too. Due consideration of the quality of the “Buntie Pulls the Strings” or “Courting” sort of thing, passing itself off as Scottish drama, in relation to contemporary European developments in drama will make this clear. It is even truer of the concept of the Auld Licht Elder or the figure that goes about with a Balmoral bonnet on, a bottle of whisky in one hand and a bulgy “gamp” in the other, and of the other lay figures of Scottish kailyaird drama, that these are the elements of a pitifully diminished myth—a myth deplorably attenuated and ineffectual compared with the myth which is potential in the same material—than it is true of the degenerated national myths in the commercial theatres of other countries, while in Scotland alone this prevailing myth is not being opposed or emulated. But that is what is really needed if headway is to be made towards a

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genuine Scottish National Drama, for as T. S. Eliot has said, "the modern dramatist, and probably the modern audience, is terrified of the myth. The myth is imagination and it is also criticism, and the two are one." A new myth must rise like the jinn out of the bottle of a little Theatre. It is absurd to imagine that Scotland can be supplied with what it has never had—and does not want, although it badly needs it—by means of a Society appealing to the general public. If creative tendencies in countries with great traditions in drama are nowadays being forced out of the great play-houses into little theatres, the Scottish movement should anticipate the inevitable by beginning there.

That, I fancy, is the gravamen of the charge Pollock would bring against the Scottish National Players, although he admires their work in some ways and would wish them success—that they have become a social institution at the expense of their original purpose. They have gained a following and failed to follow the gleam. What hope is there for a play that does not please their members? Obviously their efforts are restricted. Their movement as they have shaped it depends upon popular fancy and therefore is not free to pursue a creative purpose. And none of the plays they have produced have represented a distinctively Scottish form, the dramatic equivalent of the *differentia* of Scots psychology. They have all been alien in form, although they have been Scottish in subject, setting, and, to some extent, in speech. Not being new and peculiar to Scotland, they have not demanded more than conventional production and acting.

Mr Pollock's Lennox Players differ from the National Players in that, under his influence, they clearly realise what is wanted and are already elaborating a technique that will correspond to it as soon as it is forthcoming. Their work on such plays as Lady Margaret Sackville's "When Andra Smith Cam' Hame," Alexander M'Gill's "Pardon in the Morning," and G. R. Malloch's "Thomas the Rhymer" (a significantly different production this last from the Scottish National Players' production of it)—despite the fact that these plays are not the Scots drama that is being awaited—showed the effects of this forethinking on problems of national technique, and to some extent preluded the technical developments that can only manifest them-

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selves with full effect as dramatic forms in full accord with Scots psychology are forthcoming.

It is pioneer work that Mr Pollock is applying himself to and fashioning his Players to further; and its importance is derived from the fact that they are the first group, and still the only group, who realise that, in the words of *The Scottish Chapbook*, "It is futile to speak of a Scottish National Theatre until a start has been made to devise a national theatrecraft. At best the Scottish National Players will help indirectly by disseminating the idea that there is (or rather should be) a difference between Scottish and English drama, and intelligent people who witness these productions will see that nevertheless no such difference exists and ask why. Once a sufficient number of these intelligent people begin to ask why with sufficient urgency, the problem of producing a really Scottish play in a manner which represents a definite effort to create a genuine Scottish National Theatre, will cease to be insoluble."

Mr Pollock and his Players will then have acquired a sufficient number of enthusiasts to enable them to start a creative studio along the Gate Theatre Salon lines and to become what they are—the spear-head of the movement temporarily *manqué* towards a Scots National Drama.

*The Lennox Players have produced:—*

Scenes from *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*—16th January, 1924.

Scenes from *Macbeth* and Gordon Bottomley's *Gruach*—14th February, 1924.

"*Till Something Happens*," by R. F. Pollock.

"*When Aundra Smith cam' Hame Again*," by the Lady Margaret Sackville.

"*The Eve of Saint John*," by J. Saunders Lewis—20th March, 1924.

"*Pardon in the Morning*," by Alexander MacGill.

"*Thomas the Rhymcr*," by G. R. Malloch—12th February, 1925.

"*Cameron o' the Track*," by Jean St. C. Balls—31st March, 1925.

And Play Readings—

*The White Headed Boy*, by Lennox Robinson.

*The Tragedy of Nan*, by John Masefield.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO.

WILLIAM AND AGNES M'CANCE.

These names are still practically unknown in Scotland and only known in England to a very limited public and on the Continent in certain advanced art-circles. But the existence of two such personalities—and their recent awakening, or return, to a sense of their distinctive potentialities as Scots and of the unique opportunities now offering themselves for a Scottish Renaissance—are unquestionably the most promising phenomena of contemporary Scotland in regard to art. If that divination of opportunity which five or six years ago led to what has since become known as the Scottish Renaissance movement, was well-founded—if, indeed, the psychological moment had arrived for a national awakening (and that was the preliminary assumption which has led to many of the subsequent activities and aspirations which I have been describing)—it was obvious that personalities of this very kind must speedily become active in Scottish art and so complement and confirm the manifestations of the new spirit already evident in literature, music, and other departments of our national life. This anticipation fulfils itself in Mr and Mrs M'Cance, and the lines along which they are now thinking and acting adumbrate the future of Scottish art—the effect of the Renaissance spirit in this sphere as it will be appreciated in retrospect. It is confirmatory of the genuine character of the whole movement that its direction in art like its direction in other departments is seen to depend upon three main factors—(a) alignment with ultra-modern tendencies manifesting themselves in-

ternationally, (b) in accordance with a new or renewed realisation of fundamental elements of distinctively Scottish psychology, (c) which have hitherto for the most part been misunderstood, misapplied, or otherwise denied free play through the operation of the various factors, political, religious, or economic, which have, until their recent setback, been conducing to and, if unarrested and reversed, would obviously have culminated in, the complete assimilation of Scotland to England and the permanent provincialisation of our country.

Both Mr and Mrs M'Cance belong to the Glasgow district, and are in their early thirties. Prior to leaving Glasgow, Mr M'Cance gave a lecture to the young "Society of Painters and Sculptors" on modern art which was received with a certain measure of hostility to say the least of it. They went to London, where he did a certain amount of illustrating and lecturing. At present he is art critic of "The Spectator." In writing of their own work one is handicapped by the fact that probably none of one's readers have seen any of it. Exceptions may perhaps be made of Mr M'Cance's portrait of Mr William Brewer and of the fifty-foot panel he painted for the *Daily News*, which has been described as one of the best examples of progressive unity in modern painting. Both, however, are highly productive artists, concerned exclusively—and this is the measure of their artistic integrity—with the basic problems with which progressive artists everywhere are to-day preoccupied and not with the commercial application of established, that is to say effete, techniques. And they are necessarily approaching these problems, and resolving them, as Scots—that is to say that the psychological factor is so directly involved and dominant in work of this kind that the difference between the effects they are securing and the effects their French or German contemporaries are securing gives the precise measure of what is distinctively Scottish in this connection. The traditions of what is called "Scottish Art" mean nothing to them—but in so far as these were not the products of acquired techniques incapable of relating Scottish psychology to art products in a specifically effective fashion correspondences will be discernible in retrospect. In the meantime their work is probably unintelligible to the great mass of those who look to find a "likeness" in a portrait (and are at sea with a psycholo-



gical criticism expressing itself in terms of the interrelationships of planes) or who demand of a picture that it reproduces a recognisable place or embodies a pleasing conception or "points a moral or adorns a tale." And the number of those in Scotland who have got beyond the stage of making such demands of any work of art with which they may be confronted is extremely small. Indeed the proportion which has yet been confronted with any work of art which does not conform to such preconceptions is extremely small. The whole course of modern art in all its amazing and absorbing developments is a sealed book to all but a mere handful of the population of Scotland. All they know about it is derived from the cheap witticisms or indignant attacks—as on Epstein's "Rima"—which occasionally diversify the popular press. And as a consequence to speak or write of art in Scotland to-day is almost inevitably to find oneself in a position similar to that so well described by Lord Dewar when, as he says, "I, once, during an after-dinner speech, used the word Lipton when I was treating of Milton, but soon found that my audience were with me in spirit."

But M'Cance's ideas on the subject of Scottish art can be bluntly set forth without reference to the history and relative aspect of ultra-modern tendencies in general. If he were interviewed on the subject he would probably say—and I, for one, would feel that the declaration gave a lead to Scottish Art which it has long awaited, however ruthlessly it traverses the prevailing conceptions on the subject—something like this: "The sooner the Scots realise that they have never had a culture the better. We have merely had a few good names. We have had a certain amount of folklore and we have a great amount of inherent vitality. We must accept the fact that we are a young nation (with tremendous elemental potentiality), which is not worn threadbare by precedent. England is on the verge of collapse, France is senile. Their culture is lacking in vitality—is dispassionate and clammy. They have no belief in posterity because there will be no posterity for them. They hark back to the past; they get hysterical because St Paul's is crumbling. They have no confidence in their own capacity to rebuild St Paul's. Scotland must dissociate itself from English culture. Scotland being a young nation has sent out feelers throughout the world, extracted what it can use to advantage, and is



now in a position to start its culture, being still vital and elemental. It can even resurrect English culture—give it new impetus and life. Now that we are about to expand culturally, let us examine our attributes. *So far there has been too great a cleavage between Engineering and Art.* Actually what has taken place in Scotland up to the present is that our best constructive minds have taken up engineering and only sentimentalists have practised art. We are largely (the world has assessed us rightly) a nation of engineers. Let us realise that a man may still be an engineer and yet concerned with a picture conceived purely as a kind of engine which has a different kind of functional power to an engine in the ordinary sense of the term. Here then is what we Scots have—a terrific vitality combined with a constructive ability unequalled by any other nation. What more do we need?—merely sufficient analytical power to clear away the maze of sentimentality and accepted “artistic” values which obscure our ideas of Art. Let us no longer alienate our engineers from Art. Let us advise our sentimentalists in Art to migrate to ‘Spiritualism’ or let us equip an expedition for them to explore the possibilities of Celtic Twilight in some remote corner of the world where they will not disturb us in our work. Let them give up cumbersome paint and canvas and take to photographing fairies on uninhabited islands. Anything. **Anyhow now is the time for a real Scottish culture.”**

Thus, roughly and readily, I imagine M'Cance would express himself on the subject, and whatever may be thought of sentiments such as these there is no denying that they suggest a means of affecting a long-overdue union between what is ungainsayably one of the dominant aptitudes of Scottish genius—(hitherto divorced from Art and confined to “practical” affairs as a consequence of that self-same materialism which has so largely conditioned the cultural desuetude of Scotland, prompted our union with England and been since generally invoked as the main, if not the sole, justification of its denationalising sequelæ; and evolved the stultifying concept of the Canny Scot at variance with our real, if suppressed, psychology)—and one of the strongest tendencies in world-art to-day, the necessity of coming to terms with the Third Factor, the Machine, and no longer confining ourselves to that overpast condition of affairs in which

only two factors had to be reckoned with—Man and Nature. M'Cance might have further strengthened his case if he had invoked not only our engineering genius but our metaphysical flair: just as the former has been confined to machinery, so the latter has been largely devoted either to theology or the law; and just as the former is now a quality *par excellence* for the tackling of some of the most difficult problems of progressive art to-day, so is the latter in significant accord with the prime requirements for the exploration of abstract form and the "pure" conveyance of states of mind. And the recent work of Mr and Mrs M'Cance is the best proof of the validity of their theories.

Compare the trend of M'Cance's mind with what Jane Heap says in a recent *Little Review* *apropos* the Machine-Age Exposition organised by that organ of *l'avant-garde*: "It is inevitable and important to the civilisation of to-day that he (the Engineer) make a union with the artist. This affiliation of Artist and Engineer will benefit each in his own domain, it will end the immense waste in each domain and will become a new creative force. . . . The snobbery, awe and false pride in the art-game, set up by the museums, dealers and second-rate artists, have frightened the general public out of any frank appreciation of the plastic arts. In the past it was a contact with and an appreciation of the arts that helped the individual to function more harmoniously. Such an exaggerated extension of one of the functions, the extension of the mind as evidenced in this invention of machines, must be a mysterious and necessary part of our evolution. The men who hold first rank in the plastic arts to-day are the men who are organising and transforming the realities of our age into a dynamic beauty. The artist and the engineer start out with the same necessity. No true artist ever starts to make "beauty"; he has no aesthetic intention; he has a problem. No beauty has ever been achieved which was not reached through the necessity to deal with some particular problem. The artist works with definite plastic laws. He knows that his work will have lasting value only if he consciously creates forms which embody the constant and unvarying laws of the universe. The aim of the engineer has been utility. He works with all the plastic elements, he has created a new plastic mystery,

but he is practically ignorant of all aesthetic laws. The beauty which he creates is accidental. The experiment of an exposition bringing together the plastic works of these two types has in it the possibility of forecasting the life of to-morrow."

Granovsky, the Russian Constructionist, who made the decor for Tzara's "Coeur a Gaz" expresses himself along analogous lines when he writes: "The term aesthetic has been so outworn by long usage that anyone employing it runs the risk of being easily misinterpreted. I propose to employ it in a strictly scientific sense, disregarding entirely its now fashionable and casual association with intuition as a criterion of plastic qualities in an object. Unfortunately the sequence and inter-relation of forms and their effect on the spectator have not as yet been established with any exactitude. . . . Were all the proportions of plasticity better known, art would pass from the confines of purely personal appreciation on to the road of original invention."

In Scotland—in art as in letters—we are still in precisely the same position as was Holland, prior to the emergence of the "De Stijl" Group in 1917—a country of pretentious and vigorous conservatism, "constantly warming up the egg of the 80's," as Theo Van Doesburg has put it, although "this celebrated movement only defended a tendency which had already lapsed in France"—a fight for the cast-off clothes of other nations.

But in the ideas of M'Cance and his wife and one or two others Scotland may soon acquire not only an equivalent to the "De Stijl" development, but, thanks to the unparalleled strength of our engineering and dialectical aptitudes if these can be reoriented and applied in cultural directions, transcend it and at one step make good the long inhibition or subversion of our most distinctive powers and become the vanguard of the art of the future.

*M'Cance is presently engaged on a new book on aesthetics, the nature of which may be gauged from the following synopsis:—(1) Introductory. Three stages in artist's development; (a) Undisciplined intensity, (b) Conscious awareness of problems, (c) with background of organisation regaining intensity; (2) Analytical—(a) Story picture: replaced by cinema; (b) portrait, inadequacy of one static visual image to portray psychology of sitter;*

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(c) *naturalistic picture, dead replica in paint always inferior to actuality*; (d) *impressionism, pseudo-scientific form of naturalism in painting*; (3) *Design in the other Arts, e.g., Novel (probably on final analysis concerned with conduct or dynamic moral values)*; (4) *Design and Life, e.g., Engineering (Economy of Force), domestic, social functions, etc.*; (5) *Psychological, how design evolves in artist's mind*; (6) *Technical, part played by senses in technique of art, habit formations, importance of tactile and kinaesthetic imagery*; (7) *Abstract Design, arbitrary form and lighting in painting*; (8) *Different kinds of design resolved by different ratios of imagery*; (9) *Speculative, inherent impulse to art, etc.*; (10) *No Standard in Art—only Qualities*; (11) *Place of Colour*; (12) *Painting centrifugal—sculpture centripetal*; (13) *Fascination of Double Line in Drawing*; (14) *Importance of subject-matter as a releasing influence to the sub-conscious*; and (15) *the Spectator or Public*.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE.

### THE NEW MOVEMENT IN VERNACULAR POETRY.

LEWIS SPENCE: MARION ANGUS.

It is an extraordinary thing that the great majority of Vernacular enthusiasts should be seeking to promote a revival of Braid Scots and at the same time endeavouring to stereotype the very things responsible for its deterioration and disuse. Nowhere is any creative reapproach to the Doric likely to be more bitterly resented and opposed than amongst those who are clamouring most vociferously for its resuscitation. So conservative is the movement headed by the Burns Federation under Sir Robert Bruce that they have committed themselves merely to an attempt to perpetuate the debased dialects still more or less current and disavowed any intention of recreating the national language *in toto*. Along with this absurdly fractional aim they conjoin an enthusiasm for these debased dialects in their written form which practically nowhere approaches the lowest planes of literature: and inveigh against any attempt to depart from the traditional and deepening rut of Post-Burnsian Kailyairdism. Dr James Devon, for example, says: "Under the name of preserving the vernacular there were people who wrote more or less cleverly in imitation of their fathers and they used words that were as foreign to usage as modern slang. The true line would be to encourage young people in the use of expressions they had heard from their elders in so far as these expressions were fitting. There could be no Scottish Renaissance until people had something to say and were bold enough to say it in the tongue with which

people were most familiar. Burns had written for his contemporaries and for the people who shared the same kind of life as he. His language was not an artificial one—he had expressed for them in the words they best understood and with which they were most familiar their feelings and his own. A circle had been formed in Glasgow for the preservation of the vernacular, and its object should commend itself to all lovers of Burns." But why form a Circle if the way towards a Scots Renaissance is *via* the most common speech and understanding?—as if almost every literary movement of any consequence were not a small coterie affair to start with and carried through as a rule amidst the indifference, if not against the opposition, of the generality. Is literary English coincident with spoken English—and do the majority of the most significant and important writers of England or any other country write for the mass of the people? Is popular taste and the mass of contemporary understanding not invariably intent on the products of mediocrity and averse to the best products of its period? Any literary language would be deplorably mutilated and devitalised if it were confined to terms in every-day use amongst the rank and file of the people. Dr Devon's contentions—and they are shared by the majority of the so-called "leaders" of this movement—will not stand a moment's examination by anyone familiar with the prerequisites and methods of literary creation. No literature of any consequence has ever been produced in any country under such limitations as Dr Devon suggests young people in Scotland should impose upon themselves. Happily young people in Scotland are manifesting quite different ideas and intentions. And they know that Burns did—and that every other writer must—employ an artificial language. Mr John Buchan has said: "Burns is by universal admission one of the most natural of poets, but he used a language which was, even in his own day, largely exotic. His Scots was not the living speech of his countrymen, like the English of Shelley, and—in the main—the Scots of Dunbar; it was a literary language subtly blended from the old 'Makars' and the refrains of folk poetry, much tinctured with the special dialect of Ayrshire and with a solid foundation of English, accented *more Boreali*." And it had its limitations. It fell far short of the stature of the potential canon of Scots. Mr Buchan says, for example, that Burns was kept from one

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special kind of magic : " the only instance I can recollect where he attains it is in the solitary line

' The wan moon is setting behind the white wave.' "

It is certain, at all events, that all the best poets of to-day and to-morrow who write in Scots must be out to obtain effects which were not within the compass of Burns or of the instrument of Scots he fashioned to other and—since achieved—surpassed ends. The true line is not that indicated by Dr Devon : but a synthetic Scots gathering together and reintegrating all the *disjecta membra* of the Doric and endeavouring to realise its latent potentialities along lines in harmony at once with distinctive Scots psychology and contemporary cultural functions and requirements. A similar feat has been accomplished elsewhere—in Norway, for example; and all the arguments which Dr Devon, Mr Alexander Keith and others have brought to bear against the proposals for a synthetic Scots have already been disposed of in Norwegian practice. The only thing we lack in Scotland—and it was that which mainly conduced to the success of the Norwegian movement—is a sufficiently intense spirit of nationalism.

Objection has been taken in other quarters to the use in such experiments as have already been made towards a synthetic Scots of such obsolete words as " eemis stane," " amplefeyst," and " yow-trummle." It is suggested that little is gained by their use. But the objection springs for the most part from the same spirit that leads to one of Blake's most celebrated lines being generally printed : " Tiger, tiger, burning bright." " But," as Mr Lytton Strachey says, " in Blake's original engraving the words appear thus—' Tyger! Tyger! burning bright'; and who can fail to perceive the difference? Even more remarkable is the change which the omission of a single stop has produced in the last line of one of the succeeding stanzas of the same poem :

' And what shoulder, and what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? and what dread feet?'

So Blake engraved the verse; and as Mr Sampson points out, ' the terrible, compressed force ' of the final line van-



ishes to nothing in the 'languid punctuation' of subsequent editions—'what dread hand, and what dread feet?' "

Ford Madox Ford in his book on Conrad tells how they used to drive "over a country of commonplace downlands and ask ourselves how we would render a field of ripe corn, a ten-acre patch of blue-purple cabbage. We would try the words in French; *sillonné*, *bleu-foncé*, *bleu-du-roi*; we would try back into English; cast around in the back of our minds for other French words to which to assimilate our English and thus continue for quiet hours." It is only by like methods that Braid Scots can be resuscitated and lifted out of the deplorable pass to which it has been reduced. But nothing is further from the minds of those who are agitating for the revival of the Doric and forming vernacular circles in Glasgow and elsewhere. What is in their minds? A correspondent writes: "On Thursday night I attended the meeting to form a vernacular circle for Glasgow, and I was never so disappointed in my life for the interest of Sir Robert Bruce, Sheriff Blair, Mr A. M. Williams, Mr George Eyre Todd, etc., lay in memorising Burns and Johnny Gibb o' Gushet-neuk, but none of the speakers ever referred to the vernacular unless to laugh at it. They were all more concerned about telling a funny story than about revealing the literary potentiality of the language. They were not concerned about the future of the tongue at all. They denied it a future and pooh-pooh'd the idea of its use as a national vernacular. They even ridiculed one West-end lady who uses nothing but Scots even in her drawing-room . . ."

Nevertheless the true creative approach to the Vernacular is being made: and is adequately illustrated in the work of Lewis Spence and Marion Angus. Both represent a radical departure from the methods of Kailyairdism. Their poetry is most interesting where it has most of those qualities which recently led another critic of the old school to say of a certain contemporary Scots poem that he did not deny its beauty, but thought it fair criticism to suggest that it *added nothing to the thought* it took as its *point de departure*. This sort of criticism—and the attitude to poetry from which it springs, the general attitude to poetry, be it remarked, of the great majority of Burns enthusiasts and admirers of Charles Murray and the lesser lights of Post-Burnsian pedestrianism—has the same defects that vitiate much in Dr Johnson's "Lives of the

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Poets." It is a like attitude that led him to declare *Lycidas* "easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting," the songs in *Comus* harsh and unmusical, Gray's work nothing but "glittering accumulations of ungraceful ornaments," Donne's merely absurd, and leads the *Aberdeen Free Press*, Dr Devon, and others to demand "sensible poetry." "Such preposterous judgments," says Lytton Strachey of Johnson, "can only be accounted for by inherent deficiencies of taste; Johnson had no ear, and he had no imagination. These are, indeed, grievous disabilities in a critic. What could have induced such a man to set himself up as a judge of poetry? The answer to the question is to be found in the remarkable change which has come over our entire conception of poetry since the time when Johnson wrote. . . . Poetry to us means primarily, something which suggests, by means of words, mysteries and infinitudes. Thus, music and imagination seem to us the most essential qualities of poetry, because they are the most potent means by which such suggestions can be invoked. But the eighteenth century knew none of these things. . . . In such a world, why should poetry, more than anything else, be mysterious? No! Let it be sensible; that was enough." And in his essay on Beddoes the same writer says: "Sir James Stephen was only telling the truth when he remarked that Milton might have put all that he had to say in *Paradise Lost* into a prose pamphlet of two or three pages. But who cares about what Milton had to say? It is his way of saying it that matters; it is his expression. Take away the expression from the *Satires* of Pope, or from *The Excursion*, and, though you will destroy the poems you will leave behind a great mass of thought. Take away the expression from *Hyperion*, and you will leave nothing at all. To ask which is the better of the two styles is like asking whether a peach is better than a rose, because, both being beautiful, you can eat the one and not the other."

So far as Braid Scots is concerned, however, "the brave translunary things" have been so long completely lacking—all but the most commonplace elements of the language have been so ruthlessly inhibited,—that if neither of these styles is better than the other in this sense, certainly there is no question as to which is most important

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at the moment and most in need of intensive cultivation. Mr Spence and Miss Angus are bringing back the roses of the Doric and re-establishing our contact in bonds of beauty with the old Makars for whom the Doric could encompass "the full circle of poetic material." As to the others peaches are few: it is the homelier turnip, at its best wholesome and not uncomely, which is in general cultivation.

Mr Spence is one of the most resourceful, versatile, and engaging of contemporary Scots. It is impossible to do justice here to the many aspects of his work. He is a recognised authority on the mythology and religions of ancient Mexico; lately he has devoted two most interesting, able, and stimulating volumes to the Atlantean problem; he is an encyclopaedist of occultism, rich in curious lore, brilliantly collated and brought thoroughly abreast of modern international research; he is a playwright and a short story writer; he is a forcible writer on current affairs, national and international. He is perhaps the finest rhetorician in Scotland to-day—in a Scotland that has, unfortunately, become so sensible and prosaic as to be dangerously inappreciative of rhetoric. As a poet his earlier work, in English, was a little too obviously influenced by French decadence; it was written to a fashion, and the writer had still to find himself. In his later English poetry he has obviously done so. Intricate music, recondite allusion, wonderful colouring, subtle intellection are the characteristics of his work. He stands alone—belonging to no school. But it is in his Vernacular verse that he has found himself most effectually, bringing to it the same exquisite sensory and intellectual equipment (an equipment not shared by another poet writing in Scots for five hundred years), and finding in the word-music and sound-suggestiveness of the Doric an even better medium than in his complex and colourful English. This will, I fancy, rank as his most signal achievement—that he was the first Scot for five hundred years to write "pure poetry" in the Vernacular. The achievement is unquestionably related to his nationalism; it was that which made him realise so clearly the causes of the sorry pass to which Braid Scots had been reduced and, following upon that, revealed to him what ought to be done, and, in part, how. He has performed that part perfectly, and some of his work will live. It is amazing that it is not

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represented in Buchan's "Northern Muse." But it will yet come to its own. Space only allows me to quote one sonnet, but it amply bears out what I have said. Where, without going back to Mark Alexander Boyd, can it be paralleled in our literature, and who will deny that it is entitled to stand alongside his "Cupid and Venus" and that it contributes to Scots verse elements of high poetry which it has singularly and almost wholly lacked since that was penned?

### PORTRAIT OF MARY STUART, HOLYROOD.

Wauken be nicht, and bydand on some boon,  
Glaumour of saul, or spirituall grace,  
I haf seen sancts and angells in the face,  
And like a fere of seraphy the moon;  
But in nae mirk nor sun-apparelled noon.  
Nor pleasance of the planets in their place,  
Of luv devine haf seen sae pure a trace  
As in yon shadow of the Scottis croun.

Die not, O rose, dispitfull of hir mouth,  
Nor be ye lillies waeful at hir snaw;  
This dim devyce is but hir painted sake,  
The mirour of ane star of vivand youth.  
That not hir velvets nor hir balas braw  
Can oueradorn, or luv mair lovely make.

Miss Angus's work must be mentioned alongside Spence's; it is notable for similar reasons, although her vein is a narrower one. She achieves, however, a higher plane of poetry than Mrs Jacob ever reaches, although her work may be lacking in certain popular qualities and an associative "body" to be found in the "Songs of Angus." Here again—in view of what I have already said—the proof is in the "preein'," and those who know the hum-drum flat-footed sentimentality of most Vernacular verse will welcome so pure and poignant a note as this:—

### MARY'S SONG.

I wad ha'e gi'en him my lips tae kiss,  
Had I been his, had I been his;  
Barley breid and elder wine,  
Had I been his as he is mine.

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The wanderin' bee it seeks the rose;  
Tae the lochan's bosom the burnie goes;  
The grey bird cries at evenin's fa;  
"My luve, my fair one, come awa'."

My beloved sall ha'e this hert tae break,  
Reid, reid wine, and the barley cake,  
A hert tae break, and a mou tae kiss,  
Tho' he be nae mine, as I am his.

The only effect a poem of that kind has amongst the great majority of vernacular enthusiasts is to start a controversy as to whether "tae" is permissible, meaning "to," or whether it should be reserved to mean "toe." The flat-footed prosaicism which has so long dominated Braid Scots letters will not be overcome without a stiff struggle. A writer on Mr William Robb's "Book of Twentieth-Century Verse" (Messrs Gowans & Gray) points out that in it "the Scottish Chapbook is so sparsely drawn upon that the latest phase of northern verse is practically unrepresented. The book is thus, in the main, true to a type so long established as to have become almost a convention. . . . Apparently Scottish dialect poetry, *as shown here*, cannot rise above its environment. The one hopeful sign is that there is evidence of a desire to do so, a desire to escape from the trammels of the past. And henceforth no one in Scotland has any excuse for not knowing exactly how we stand, poetically; the fifty or so poets whose work in the vernacular is exemplified here tell us plainly what we can do. What we have not done is immeasurable."

But the new movement has accomplished a great deal more than Mr Robb gives it credit for. True, he includes poems by Dr MacGillivray and Miss Angus: but they should not be in that gallery. It is significant that such an anthology of the vernacular verse product of the past twenty-five years should so unscrupulously boycott the "growing end" of its subject, and illustrate the tactics of mediocrity on the defensive. Those who wish to read what is really of consequence in modern Scots verse must look elsewhere.

*Mr Spence is presently preparing a collection of his recent poems for publication. See also his "The Phoenix and Other Poems" (Porpoise Press Broadsheet, Dec. 1923) and his "Modern Tendencies in Scotland" (Nine-*

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*teenth Century and After*, October, 1925). For Miss Angus see her "*The Tinker's Road*" (Messrs Gowans and Gray, 1924). Attention may also be drawn to George Dickson's "*Peter Rae*" (Messrs Allen and Unwin)—incidentally of special interest as an attempt to deal with industrial civilisation, machinery, the War, and other contemporary problems in poetry, and partly in Scots; William Ogilvie's "*The Witch and Other Poems*" (Porpoise Press); and Thomas Sharp's "*New Poems*" (Messrs Macmillan, 1925). Other poets using Scots to some extent along individual lines and clear—or occasionally clear—of the Burns' rut are "*Tamar Faed*," Miss Hilary Staples, Mr William Soutar, Miss Jessie Annie Anderson, Mr Robert Crawford, Mr Joseph Lee, Mr Andrew Dodds, the Rev. T. S. Cairncross, and Professor Alexander Gray. The principal figures in the conventional groove after Charles Murray—a long way after—are, perhaps, Miss Mary Symon, Thomas Morton, David Rorie, W. D. Cocker ("*Dandie and Other Poems*," Messrs Gowans and Gray, 1925), John Smellie Martin ("*Scottish Earth*," Messrs Hodder and Stoughton), and Gilbert Rae ("*'Mang Lowland Hills*," Messrs Collins, 1923). R. L. Cassie's work ("*The Gangrel Muse*," *Aberdeen Newspapers, Ltd.*, 1925, etc.) has a dialectical richness and interest which compensates to some extent for its poverty as verse, and the same author's "*Heid or Hert*" (1923) is one of the few contemporary efforts in wholly vernacular prose.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR.

WILLIAM POWER : W. SORLEY BROWN.

Of the critics who write for the Scottish press and sign their work either with their name, initials, or pseudonym, only two require to be considered in these studies—William Power, of the *Glasgow Herald* and W. Sorley Brown, of the *Border Standard*. Mr William Jeffrey has done a certain amount of useful and creditable critical work and played a timely role as the fugleman of the new movement in Scottish Poetry heralded by the publication of *Northern Numbers*: but he is primarily a poet and as such has already been dealt with. Reference will be made later on to the work as playwright and novelist of Mr George Blake: but his work as literary editor of the *Glasgow Evening News* was as undistinguished and ephemeral as his subsequent essays in *John o' London's Weekly*, on which curiously enough he succeeded Mr Sidney Dark, have been. Its level was rarely above that of trivial gossip, and topicality and the exigencies of contemporary journalism were its conditioning factors. Even within these limits, however, good work can be done: but the fashion set by Saint Beuve has not found an effective exponent in Scottish journalism yet. The main objection to what chit-chat does appear is that it is not concerned with pure letters, but with book-publishing: criticism is subservient to commercial considerations. So far as Scottish literature is concerned advertising and other interests convert most of the "book notes" into Anglifying propaganda and dictate a subtle contempt for Scottish letters as such, which generally finds its expression in the assump-



tion that a frank acceptance of permanently provincial limitations is the only proper attitude in a Scots writer. The same interests—and the sort of talents which go to secure their possessors positions as literary editors on most of the daily papers—account for the general acceptance of popular London standards, and the absence of any differentiation in taste between Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen as compared with London. Blake's work, however, at its worst has always been infinitely superior to the inane lucubrations of some of our London Scots—Mr James Milne, for example, or Mr Brodie Fraser. Dr J. M. Bulloch is on a higher plane as a book-reviewer and occasional essayist, while he has a refreshing regard for some, at any rate, of the differentia of Scottish life and literature. His principal claims to regard lie in other directions, however—in particular, genealogy, a field he has made peculiarly his own. Mr Alexander Keith, of the *Aberdeen Free Press and Journal*, belongs to a bygone age: and his extraordinary ineptitudes in dealing with contemporary cultural phenomena have probably not been paralleled anywhere since Keats was told that "this will not do." His complete inability to understand modern developments of all kinds gives his essays priceless qualities of humour of the kind H. L. Mencken treasures up in the "Americana" section of the *American Mercury*. He is a Rip Van Winkle giving vent to anachronistic gaffes. Consider the following extract from one of his recent articles, for example:—"At odd times in the history of literature—as of everything else—new 'schools' of writers emerge and new 'movements' are initiated. As a rule, when we have got accustomed to the novelty, and had time to investigate its qualities, we discover that there is nothing so very new in it after all. . . . Studious comparison, then, and a little adjustment end in revealing to us the superficially extraordinary fact that Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides cherished substantially the same philosophy and expounded substantially the same doctrine not only as Hardy, Conrad, and Galsworthy, but as the most eminent of those whom we are pleased to term the 'modern' novelists. The angles of approach are slightly different; that is all." *Verb. Sap.*

"The Critic on the Hearth" (Mr Norval Scrymgeour) of the *Dundee Advertiser* is a genuine lover of literature of an old-fashioned type, but he is handicapped in three

ways—by the paucity of space allotted to him, the need to devote that space to noticing as many as possible of the books that come in (with due regard to a fair division amongst the various publishing firms), and the necessity of saying a good word of one kind or another for all, or practically all, of them. As a consequence he is seldom able to devote more than a short "stick-full" to any one book. His heart is in the right place, however, and not infrequently his head too. The deterioration of such papers as the *Dundee Advertiser* in their attitude to literature within the past decade or so cannot be overlooked. It has accompanied a general transvaluation in the scale of news values which followed the inception of Northcliffe's "New Journalism." Not so very many years ago the *Dundee Advertiser* was a solid organ of an excellent type. Literature in these days was accorded something like its due space. Now the death of a Conrad or an Anatole France has news value for little more than half-a-dozen lines: and the whole field of literature only commands about one column per week as against at least two pages devoted to football. *The Scotsman*, on the other hand, continues to devote a considerable amount of space to book-reviews, and has occasional quasi-literary articles and leaders as well: but the *Scotsman's* literary journalism has always been a byword. The *Dundee Advertiser's* one column is certainly worth ten times as much as all the space devoted to books in *The Scotsman* in the course of a week put together.

The *Border Standard* is a local weekly, but the personality of its editor, and proprietor, Mr Sorley Brown, has given it a literary quality and influence second to that of no paper in Scotland save the *Glasgow Herald*, and it is a remarkable fact that it not infrequently devotes more space to purely literary articles than the *Glasgow Herald* does in the course of a week. It was, for example, the only Scottish paper that deemed that the life and work of Roger Quin, the Tramp Poet, deserved, on his death, as much notice as is commonly given to a cup-tie: and whereas the majority of Scottish papers seldom give more than a short lyric in any one issue, the *Border Standard* reproduced as a special supplement the whole sequence of Lord Alfred Douglas's prison sonnets. Mr Sorley Brown himself is a trenchant writer and an acute and fearless critic, but he is less often concerned with purely literary

than with moral issues. Of his essay on "The Genius of Lord Alfred Douglas" (1913), John Buchan wrote: "It is very well done—sound and acute criticism, and it wanted doing, for A. D. has never had proper recognition. I agree with you that he is a far greater poet than Wilde; indeed there is no living man or woman who can equal his best sonnets." This year (1925) Mr Sorley Brown has made another "heroic foray against the attitude of neglect and contempt for true genius" by publishing an able and illuminating brochure on T. W. H. Crosland.

Mr Power's work is on an entirely different plane: and both in form and substance demands—and commands—more attention than all other "literary writing" in the Scottish Press to-day. He is a true critic, concerned with the fundamental factors in art, and confines himself to no one field, writing, as the mood prompts or occasion demands, on literature, the drama, art, the music-hall, travel and what not. He is, indeed, too *ondoyant et divers* and the superficial range of his work could profitably be contracted to increase its depth. On the whole, however, he is as clever and stimulating a journalist of arts and letters as can be expected in the present condition of provincial journalism even on such a paper as the *Glasgow Herald*; and the Scottish Renaissance movement owes a great deal to him. He is practically the only critic in Scotland who has recognised the true inwardness of the post-War phenomena in Scottish arts and letters, and his position enabled him to secure for these developments a sympathy and following—what is called a "good press"—in the only quarter where a "good press" was likely to be of the slightest use. I am in a position to know just how slight that use was even in Glasgow: but that was not Power's fault. In a recent article on "John o' Badenyon," for example, he makes bold to say that "the best things by far for Scots children to learn are Scots songs. . . . And the very best hobby for grown-up Scots, one that will last them as long as their senses endure, is a study of Scots literature. . . . For a potent spirit lies within those volumes of Scottish poetry and song, a spirit which, when liberated, will prove stronger than industrialism, latifundia, and the sporting system. We shall see 'a dead man win a fight.' The Makaris will re-make Scotland." When practically all the inferior papers of Scotland are jeering at the very idea of a Scot-

tish Renaissance or misconceiving the issues in the most hopeless fashion, it is significant that so robust a piece of vaticination should be pronounced in what is incontestably Scotland's greatest organ to-day—by a critic who, owing to the plane upon which his paper is conducted, is necessarily head and shoulders above those who discharge equivalent functions in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee. It is, in other words, noteworthy that the whole essence of the plea underlying the movement for a revival of Braid Scots should be so unequivocally championed by the only literary journal in Scotland which has a public for literary work on a level similar in expression and ideation to that which appears in Manchester, Liverpool, Dublin, or Belfast. The necessity of expressing himself on a certain level can sometimes save a man from the *gaucheries* and *gaffes* to which those of whom lower standards are required too readily succumb.

An earlier essay of Mr Power's, however, is one of the most important documents in the development of the Scottish Renaissance movement. A certain type of critic is apt to say that the movement so far has consisted only of propaganda—only “of the posters”—that the actual work has still to be done. This is a mistake. The Scottish Renaissance has taken place. The fruits will appear in due course. Earlier or later—that does not alter the fact. For the Scottish Renaissance has been a propaganda of ideas, and their enunciation has been all that was necessary. Mr Power is one of the few who have realised that, and he does not hesitate to say so in the article to which I have referred. He says, for example:—“For over a century Scotland has attempted to put her past definitely behind her, except for tourist purposes, and to devote herself exclusively to large-scale industry, the letting of shootings, the breeding of prize-stock, and the export of whisky, Empire builders, and heids o' depariments. There is something not unalluring about this decline into complacent provincialism. Gear-gathering and purely individual aims make smaller demands upon the average mind than a full national life. Literary renaissances are bothersome things. Best to assume that Scottish history ended with Scott, put your feet on the fender, ‘ferlie at the folk in Lunnon,’ and turn with a tranquil mind to the chartularies of Pluscarden, the fluctuations of the price of fish at Leith in the sixteenth century, the

witchburnings of James VI., Lockhart's 'Scott,' and the History of the U.P. Church. Nations, however, do not retire from business quite so easily. The past has a propellant power undreamt of by antiquarians. Ghosts from our emptied countryside flit through the industrial areas where two-thirds of the population are bunched. They squeak and jibber quaint Babylonish nonsense about land values, municipal this and that, and the exploitation of the proletariat. What they really want to say, but they have lost the language for it, is that a nation in which three-fourths of the population are divorced from the land and from the sanative variety of rural life is not in a healthy state. The same idea haunts the mind of the middle-class Scot who has not been drugged by an English public-school education. Also, he begins to feel the personal need for a spiritual centre of national life. He wants to give a present and a future tense to the things that constitute the real soul of the Scottish nation. Our young men have visions, and our old men dream dreams. . . . The signs of a national literary renaissance are plainly evident. Our poets and essayists have definitely moved away from the flat-footed moralising, maudlin sentiment, chortling 'wut' and cosy prejudice that degraded so-called Scottish literature in the period between Scott and Douglas Brown. They have realised that art is not an evasion of life but a brave and closely studied attempt to get at its essentials. It is *la vraie vérité*. . . . The champions of provincial slumber and facile imitativeness who put up their umbrellas in Edinburgh when it is raining in London, find it easy to pour cold water on the idea of a Scottish literary renaissance. Art, they say, should be spontaneous. A literary renaissance that tries to root itself in a national impulse is like a tree standing on its head. But the Scottish literary renaissance has already begun to root itself in Scottish life, which includes the whole history of Scottish literature."

His point of view in regard to Braid Scots can be profitably compared with that of the majority alike of the opponents and enthusiasts for its revival (although in view of the success of the *landsmal* movement in Norway I am not prepared to concede that, given an adequate nationalistic spirit, Braid Scots cannot be revived as a prose medium, too, or rather—since little or no Scots prose yet exists—be made into one):—"What of Gaelic and the

Scottish vernacular? Gaelic is dying as a spoken tongue. *Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin*, we may quote to the Highlanders. But as a subject of literary study, along with Irish Gaelic, it is of priceless value. Really good translations of Gaelic poetry, by a Scottish Douglas Hyde, would send a rich tributary stream of inspiration into Scottish literature. Glasgow ought to be the world-centre of Celtic scholarship. The Scottish vernacular is also dying from popular speech. For that reason it can have no future in prose literature. 'Johnny Gibb' is a unique *tour de force*. It lacks transparency and melodic flow; it is a conglomerate of quaint opacities that cloud the sense and hold up the narrative; it is everything that good prose is not. Like German, only more so, Scots is chaotic in prose and spontaneously formful in verse. It is loaded to the muzzle with gnomic, homely, comic, tragic and romantic suggestions. It is an arsenal of spells and evocations. Its inspirative power was manifested two centuries ago when a small group of vernacular poets in Scotland brought about the Romantic Revival and the Return to Nature in Europe. The power of Scots is still undiminished. . . . It has become that unique phenomenon, a language unspoken but sung and felt, and alive with all the elemental forces that lie behind the huge mechanism of intellect and civilisation. Reproaches about resort to Jamieson need not trouble our Scottish poets; accuracy and an approach to standard Scots are the first essentials; localisms should be banned; if a word is 'felt,' and the feeling of it is conveyed to the reader, then its use was justified. With Dr Craigie to keep them right in verbal detail, the poets will go ahead in Scots, never fear. *They are handling something bigger and more vital than Provençal, Catalan, or even, in some respects, modern English.* And the English prose of Scottish authors will derive strength from the stream of vernacular poetry that flows beside it; not so much by the taking over of savoury words and expressive phrases as by the inspiration of perpetual contact with the elemental soul of a nation."

Note the sentence I have italicised. Mr Power is alive, too, to the larger hope of the Scottish Renaissance, first seized upon by Professor Denis Saurat in his brilliant article on the Scottish Renaissance Group in *La Revue Anglo-Américaine*, and says: "Europe, wounded and weakened and disillusioned by the War, is a prey to

parasitical influences of morbidity, spiritualism, freakishness, pseudo-psychology, and deadly materialism. Her aeroplanes cleave the clouds, but her soul remains below. Once again, as two centuries ago, after the dreadful wars of Louis XIV., she looks around for springs of healing. May she not find them once again in the waters called forth by Scottish poets from the rocks of their native land?"

*Mr Power has published "The World Unvisited" (Gowans and Gray, 1922). See also "The Drama in Scotland" (The Scots Magazine, April, 1924): and numerous articles in the "Glasgow Herald," "John o' London's Weekly," etc.*



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE.

### THE NEW MOVEMENT IN SCOTTISH HISTORIOGRAPHY.

GEORGE PRATT INSH.

It has been said that "Happy is the country that has no history." Scotland is practically history-less so far as the last century or so is concerned at all events: but whether it is happy or not is a matter that may be left to politicians and others to debate. Mr William Graham, M.P. for Central Edinburgh, has commented on the tremendous leeway that has been allowed to develop in Scottish economic and social documentation. Scottish scholarship has been advertently starved of its due financial facilitation: Scottish records, as Professor R. K. Hannay and others have complained, have been largely mis-kept and are in chaos. On no single Scottish political or economic issue is there a single book of a thoroughly up-to-date, competent, and comprehensive kind capable of giving a lead to intelligent people. The necessary facts and figures for coming to definite conclusions in regard to any Scottish question are practically inaccessible to the man-in-the-street, and popular conceptions in general—when there are any (and usually there are none)—are wide of the mark. It follows that Scottish politics are largely opportunist, based on no fundamental conceptions, having nothing like adequate information or an adequate national attitude behind them, and destitute of continuity and coherence. Scottish issues emerge adventitiously and sporadically in British politics and journalism from time to time, and occasionally loom importantly enough for a little: but the attitudes adopted towards them seldom include any dictated by principles derived from an ex-

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haustive consideration of Scotland as an independent entity; but are, as a rule, casually and incidentally adopted. There is, generally speaking, no coherent conception of the course of events in Scotland—as distinct from England—during the past century at least. The whole field has been obscured by masses of extraneous material, by British, Imperial, and international considerations, which have served to overwhelm and thrust out of sight all the specifically Scottish data—all the information which, had it been properly related instead of being “divided and overcome,” would have served as a ready touchstone and test of, for example, the gain or loss to Scotland through the Unions of the Crowns and the Parliaments. To isolate such information now is exceedingly difficult.

The history of Scotland as a whole, apart from that merely of the last century or thereabouts, has suffered greatly through the increasing Anglification of our school curricula, and of Scottish life and letters generally. The Editor of *THE SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL*\* has recently been pleading for the devotion of more time and a different spirit to the study of Scottish History in Scottish schools—but he has required to finish up his plea by admitting that a pre-requisite of any such development must be the provision of appropriate text-books. So far they do not exist. They have still to be written. Another recent writer on the subject has pointed out that those responsible for the raising of the question of the better teaching of Scottish history in Scottish schools are very largely “under the impression that all that is required to be done is to increase the time at the disposal of teachers for Scottish history. Much more than that is required. There are very few teachers at the present time capable of teaching Scottish history, and it is imperative that we should have, what we have not now, teachers properly qualified to teach the subject. The position at present is as follows:—Trained teachers with Chapter V. qualification to teach English—that is, who have studied at the University in the classes of English Literature,

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\*For full report of this important address see “*Scottish Home Rule*” (Vol. 6, No. 6.—December, 1925).

Anglo-Saxon (or Latin, or Moral Philosophy), with a little British History, or Italian literature, plus any two other subjects, are considered by the Education Authority as qualified to teach English. In many cases they have not studied or read a word of history of any kind, still less history from a Scotsman's point of view, from the time when they left the intermediate school at the age of 14 until they return as recognised teachers of the subject. At the University there is a class devoted to Scottish History and literature. Surely the obvious solution of this problem is for the Authorities to select teachers whose honours English degrees include the degree in this subject. This would at least ensure that Scottish history is taught by teachers who know something about the subject they teach. . . . But, after all, the crux of the matter is not the mere teaching of Scots history; it is rather the point of view from which it is taught. Our present school histories present it not as a national thing, but as an unfortunate and sometimes not at all necessary prelude to English Imperialism." Arguing along similar lines, in my inaugural address to the Edinburgh University Historical Association, I suggested that one of the criteria of history was its power of making history—a test that would certainly play havoc with practically everything that has been written with regard to Scottish history—and that to rewrite Scots history in Braid Scots (at any rate, the history of a period when Scots was in general use) might prove a valuable corrective and supply us, if the task could be carried out with true genius, with a work whereby we could adequately test the denationalised character of the vast bulk of the literature on the subject. I declared too that no distinctively Scottish philosophy of history had yet emerged nor had any modern Scottish historian written of his subject on a plane corresponding to that of the foremost living historians in other countries, while most of the historical work that was being done was Scottish only in subject-matter and was lagging far behind contemporary European scholarship in its psychological penetration, in its "economic realism," in its accurate recreation of atmosphere. Stylistically and in almost every other respect Scottish history remained provincial, inadequate to the conception of "Scotland—a Nation," and, to a large extent, over-Anglicised. Some of these points

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have been underlined—and the whole point of view has been effectively related to the present world position of historiography—in a very interesting article on “The Psychological Interpretation of History” by Mr W. H. Marwick, which appeared in *THE SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL* of 16th October, and which can hardly fail to exercise a very important influence on Scottish historiography in the immediate future.

The existing position is very well described by Mr Henry Lamond in a letter to the *Times* of November 11th, 1925, in the course of which he says that “the best way Scottish scholarship can acknowledge its indebtedness to the Faculty of Advocates for the transference of the Advocates’ Library to the National Board of Trustees would be the combined effort of Scottish scholars to present to the new National Library a real ‘History of Scotland’ based on the results of modern research. Never has Scotland been so fortunate in the number of scholars of competence resident within her gates. Never has Scotland stood more in need of such a work. In the light of modern research her whole history needs rewriting from the earliest time till 1603, while from the latter date onward till the present day it is time that those Scotsmen who remained in Scotland should receive recognition of the part they played in developing their native country during these three eventful centuries. To-day Scotland has less public spirit and courage as a nation than a Balkan republic.”

But the very emergence and expression of sentiments such as these—and they are emerging and being more emphatically expressed on all hands throughout Scotland to-day—is a sign of a change in the national spirit; and, as a matter of fact, the supply has already been anticipating the demand—the Renaissance spirit has been manifesting itself in Scottish historiography during recent years, and its developments are already strongly marked. The general outlines of our national evolution have been traced by Hume Brown, Andrew Lang and Law Mathieson. Recent books which represent the new tendencies which are now at work and indicate the lines upon which our historians have now begun to move are (a) “Domestic Life in Scotland, 1488-1688,” by John Warrack (1920),

which represents the effort to get beyond the dull and mummified details of the text-book of political history and to attempt the reconstruction of the life of a past age in a fuller fashion; and (b) Alan Orr Anderson's "Early Sources of Scottish History, A.D. 500 to 1286," (1922) which represents the movement towards tracing the international aspects of Scottish history, Mr Anderson, in his two volumes having gone to the Irish and Scandinavian chroniclers to supplement his earlier study of Scottish history as it appeared in the English chroniclers and in the Scottish sources available. It is along these two lines that Scottish history must develop if there is to be any hope of its aspiring to follow in the great traditions of the older Scottish historians. It naturally follows that, in the general evolution of Scottish history, we shall pass beyond all that has been done by Hume Brown or Andrew Lang and others, so that it is not necessary to single out here any particular historians whose work remains to be challenged. But what does want to be challenged is the idea that history in Scotland was a negligible thing before the advent of English professors in our midst about the end of the nineteenth century, and this is the third line that, in conjunction with the other two, is presenting itself to Scottish historians to-day—the need to emphasise the fact that we have an old and great Tradition of History in Scotland. Knox and Bishop Lesley, Calderwood and Archbishop Spottiswoode, Woodrow and Father Innes, Hume and Robertson, and so on—names such as these refute the assumption that Scottish historical scholarship is a recent growth, transplanted from the south of the Border. Another point is that Scottish history has been written very largely from the Presbyterian standpoint. This attitude has met with incisive criticism from Andrew Lang and others: and it is to be hoped that we shall soon have full justice done to the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian standpoints and their traditions of scholarship—just as in political and economic respects we may hope to counterbalance the fact that the great majority of Scottish historians have come to their task pre-committed to favour the existing relationships of England and Scotland and the existing state of society.

As regards the more immediate tasks awaiting accomplishment in the field of Scottish history, there must be a general move forward. The vast stores of manu-

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script material in the Register House must be adequately catalogued and the work of issuing printed calendars ought to go steadily on; this work of documenting research must be attended by an effort to incorporate its results in fresh, well-written volumes that will appeal to the general public. Some effort should be made to bring typical extracts from the Scottish records before the public in a cheap and handy form (as in Dr Insh's "School Life in Old Scotland," Educational Institute of Scotland, 1925, 2s.—a model of its kind in every respect). The records contain much that is of surpassing human interest, and the Scots in which they are set forth is virile and racy—a magnificent prose instrument.

Four men, in particular, are shaping this new and humane school of Scottish history. These are the subject of the present study, Dr George Insh, Principal Lecturer in History at Glasgow Training Centre; Professor J. H. Baxter, of St Andrews, whose researches in European History will ultimately revolutionise our attitude to mediaeval Scots history; Alan O. Anderson, whose work is preparing the way for a clear understanding of the main factors in early Scottish history; and Professor R. K. Hannay, whose enthusiasm and insight have done a great deal to strengthen and expand the School of History founded in Edinburgh by the late Professor Hume Brown. Attention must also be directed to the Historical Association of Scotland's new series of pamphlets—Dr W. Douglas Simpson's "The Scottish Castle" (1924) and Miss Mary G. Williamson's "Edinburgh Between the Unions." Both of these were discussed in an article entitled "Tower and Town" (SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, June 26, 1925) by Miss Irene F. M. Deane, in an article valuable alike for its scholarship, its point of view and its sense of historical values. In Miss Deane we have obviously a writer of very great promise.

To come from the general aspect of affairs to Dr Insh, I have chosen him because he best exemplifies the new spirit in Scottish history and is exerting by his position at Jordanhill, his addresses to various bodies, and his published books and articles, a more general influence than any other contemporary Scottish historian. All the lines of development I have indicated are present in Dr Insh's



work. Of his *Scottish Colonial Schemes* (Messrs Maclehose & Jackson, 1923) Professor C. M. Andrews of Yale University, writing in the *American Historical Review*, well said: "Quite apart from its value as a contribution of exceptional merit to the history of Scottish emigration to America in the seventeenth century, Dr Insh's volume is significant as marking a new and growing interest among British writers of to-day in their colonial past. Furthermore, both because the work is written by a Scotsman from the standpoint of Scotland, and because to a considerable extent it is based upon materials in Scottish archives, from which frequent quotations are made, it has a racy flavour all its own and a character essentially and peculiarly Scottish. No one but a Scotsman could create the atmosphere that distinguishes this book." Dr Insh has edited for the Scottish History Society a volume of papers illustrative of the voyages of Scottish ships to the Isthmus of Darien and to the Eastern seas; and is at present engaged in a study of the Darien Scheme in its relation to the social, economic, and political history of Scotland; while in the article from which I have just quoted, Professor Andrews expressed the hope which all who realise the importance of the subject and the value of Dr Insh's work and his special equipment for this particular task will share, that once he shall have completed his Darien volume, "he will be interested to pursue his subject into the years following the Union, even on to that period after 1760, when there began the Highland emigration which lasted until the Revolution, and brought thousands of Scotsmen to America and the West Indies."

Happily, Dr Insh is still a young man—in his early forties, and much may be expected from him. The University of Glasgow have already fitly recognised the value of his work by conferring the degree of D.Litt. on him in 1922, and some six months later—in the same year—the jealously guarded and seldom bestowed honour of Research Fellow.

Dr Insh finds time to take a many-sided interest in Scottish cultural activities, apart from his own particular work. He has taken an active interest in the work of the Scottish National Theatre Society both as a member of Council and as a member of the Play-reading Committee, while his essays in dramatic criticism based upon the Scottish National Players' productions have evidenced his



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knowledge of the theatre and insight into the various arts that are tributary to it. His services as a lecturer are in great demand, and he has lectured under the auspices of the Workers' Educational Association, the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, the Glasgow Bibliographical Society, the West of Scotland Branch of the Historical Association, and numerous other bodies, while he has taken a lively and helpful interest in all the manifestations of the Scottish Renaissance movement, and was one of the Associate Editors of the short-lived *Northern Review*.

An admirable sketch of his career appeared in *The Bailie* (October 17, 1923), and the writer of it began by saying: "At the present day the study of Scottish history is passing through an interesting phase. With the broadening and deepening of the spirit of historical scholarship there has come a period of intensive study and research. The days when an individual historian could attempt the task of writing by himself a history of Scotland seem now in a far distant past; the days that will see the production of a history representing the combined efforts of Scottish scholars exist as yet only in the vision of a few ardent enthusiasts; in the meantime the work of investigation and exploration of research and formulation is being steadily carried on by a small band of Scottish students."

And in the forefront of that band stands the quiet, genial, unassuming and yet resolute and extraordinarily resourceful form of Dr Insh.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX.

STEWART CARMICHAEL.

In one of my poems I say  
"Dundee is dust  
And Aberdeen a shell."

And in the dust that is Dundee Mr Stewart Carmichael, if he is nothing so startling as a trumpet, is at least an elf-land horn, serving to maintain an all-too-easily missed but yet never wholly vanquishable note of beauty in the dreariest waste of materialism that contemporary Scotland possesses. Carmichael's studio in the Nethergate is like an oasis in a desert—one of the very few spots in Dundee where there is any spiritual life. There are others: a few; but they are all cultivated but non-creative, passive, not active. Not that Carmichael's makes any headway or does more than maintain itself. It is at anyrate quite imperceptibly, if at all, that (to vary the metaphor) it is "leavening the lump." But how extraordinary that it should even contrive to preserve itself with undiminished purity throughout the desolating years in so utterly antipathetic an environment. Dundee has always been almost a cipher culturally. Practically no good thing in any of the arts has come out of it. Within the past few decades it has become more than ever sterile and degenerate. It only requires a comparison of the files of its papers for the past year or two with those of, say, quarter of a century or half-a-century ago to demonstrate the decline, in range, in tone, in all respects: and as with its journalism so with all the other aspects of its life. The extremely low wages that always obtained in its staple industry, and

the consequent general debilitation of the community, are largely responsible. Dundee to-day has a population of poorer physique, with a higher incidence of illness and mortality, than any other place in Scotland. Incredible conditions prevail in it. One tenement has no fewer than three stories below the level of the street: and these stories are divided up into the one-roomed houses of which there are so many in Dundee. There are, indeed, numerous cellars occupied as one-roomed houses. Under such conditions the general mental level is correspondingly low. And the complement of such a state of affairs is certainly found in the Municipal Art Gallery, with its almost incredibly vulgar Herkomer, its fatuous Henry Kerr, its "Magazine-Art" display of Grey's "Neuve-Chapelle," and its blatant portraits of all manner of local nonentities cheek-by-jowl in the most extraordinary fashion with a minority of works of genuine—a few of really high—merit. There are a few wealthy private "patrons of art" in Dundee, but most of them are commercial collectors rather than genuine connoisseurs or picture-lovers, and, in each of these categories, the "inferiority complex" is generally in full blast. This accounts for the fact that there is a market, however limited, in Dundee for modern French stuff, Cezanne, Van Gogh, and the like. But between plutocratic extremes and proletarian nescience there is practically no public interest to sustain native art-products. Stewart Carmichael has been content with poor pickings, and that has enabled him to maintain himself where many another would have failed. Happily, too, he has more than one string to his bow. There used to be quite a little group of artists in Dundee some years ago—in it but not of it—but Carmichael is almost the only survivor now. The others are dead, or have gone to Edinburgh or London. Their places have not been filled by any younger men. One of the few still within close call is Alec Grieve, Carmichael's brother-in-law, who lives at Tayport. He is a landscape artist of individuality and power; and used to contribute very powerful cartoons to *The Labour Leader*.

The work whereby Stewart Carmichael makes his living—the work that sells—and that finds acceptance most readily at the Royal Scottish Academy and elsewhere is his architectural work—his water-colour drawings and lithographs and etchings of old buildings in this country and abroad. These are admirable of their kind. Mr Car-

michael's early architectural training has stood him in excellent stead for this type of work. At his annual exhibition this year he displayed exceptionally fine water-colours of Furnes and Louvain and the Abbey of Arbroath. Earlier Italian studies of the same kind, and pictures of Edinburgh and of Balmerino Abbey, and many others all carried, as these do, a fine sense of architectural values and a capacity for bodying forth the nature and effects of buildings with verisimilitude and power. All these, of course, were purely "representational" and romantic instincts were evidenced in the choice of subject and angle of approach. Such documentation of the contemporary scene at a remove—but not too great a remove—from the man-in-the-street's habitual view has values of its own, apart from the purely artistic, and these exercises of Carmichael's skill should be in greater demand than they are. There is quite a considerable public who could quite well afford to buy such work, but who still prefer types of art with, at once, less associative and less aesthetic value. While he executes them with rare skill, however, of none of these works could it be said: "This is quintessential Carmichael—none other but he could have contrived just this effect." It is therefore unfortunate, perhaps, that he should devote himself, perhaps require to devote himself, so largely to this type of work, which, when all is said and done, many another artist in Europe (if comparatively few in Scotland to-day) can or could do equally well. Nor is there anything distinctively Scottish in Carmichael's approach to architecture in art. In his choice of colour—in his choice of subject, even—there may be little *differentia*; a foreign artist might differ in such details, but, fundamentally, nothing distinctively Scottish transpires in this category of his art.

And Stewart Carmichael is very notably and entirely a Scot, combining within himself both poles of our country's culture. He has subsumed the whole of our national past to an extraordinary degree and is equally at home in Gaelic and Braid Scots. The traditional disjunction between, even antipathy of, the two, which has done so much to prevent Scotland integrating itself effectively, does not exist for him. His personality is his greatest asset. He stands for all things that are noble and of good report. He is the very antithesis of the stock-conception of a Scotsman. Contact with so fine and vital

a Scot in these degenerate days carries one back to pre-Reformation Scotland, to the days when Scotland was one with Europe in life and faith. By some miracle of personal synthesis Carmichael has transcended the provincialism to which the Scots nature has so largely become subjected and preserves unabated in himself the high old qualities of our people in full communion with the culture of Europe. That he is a man of his own generation, and almost wholly unaffected by such recent technical developments and experimental tendencies as we expect in *les jeunes*, is no condemnation of his work nor any reflection on the quality of his continuing vitality. But in so far as the nationalism in his work is concerned, and the purity of his own raciality, he has been the gainer. If the newer techniques are to naturalise themselves in Scotland—or if the Scottish genius is to develop independently along lines analogous and complementary to recent European tendencies—art such as that of Stewart Carmichael's must be reckoned with and its significance as nationalism understood. All the art products of Scots—and particularly Scots living in Scotland and depending wholly or mainly on the Scottish public—must be reckoned with from this point of view, as a means of finding why certain forms of artistic expression have hitherto been favoured by Scottish artists and the Scottish public, and thus what lets and hindrances, psychological and commercial, have determined the course of art in Scotland and what general attitude or capacity of response to art—in a word, atmosphere—has been developed. But Stewart Carmichael's work offers far more positive answers than these to creative investigation seeking to found itself securely in national tradition. If his architectural studies offer little that is seizably national, it is otherwise with his portraits. Here his consciousness of what is distinctively Scottish finds scope. There is no mistaking some of these faces for other than Scottish. His insight into Scots character is inerrandable. In his recent exhibition his "Mrs J. Smith, Aberdeen," was a painting of this kind and, as one critic wrote, "It is not so much a 'speaking' subject as a subject that with difficulty refrains from speaking, and one could imagine that very wise, witty and pawky observations would be heard if this kindly-faced old lady spoke her mind." Again an attitude of consequence—constructive and comprehensive—informs his splendid friezes of

Scottish History, the Makars, Scottish Women (with Jenny Geddes—not Queen Mary—in the centre) and so forth. Here then is an artist who has maintained a many-sided relationship with the genius of his country at a time when that was being more and more obscured by an overwhelming pressure of assimilation to English standards. He has unobtrusively but subtly and persistently maintained the national traditions in his particular field of art, and deserves ampler recognition in these days when the cause of "Scotland—a Nation" is once more in the ascendant.

But his most distinctive vein is represented by his symbolical compositions. Here the poet side of his nature emerges. It is not surprising that these pictures should be held in little esteem to-day and their real value missed. But as manifestations of the Scottish Psyche—as glimpses into the soul of Celtic imagery—they stand in a category of their own. They are very different from the ornamental designs of John Duncan—another fine Scot of the older generation. Carmichael is less concerned with outward trappings. His visions are more profound, and personal to himself while distinctively Scottish in quality. He cannot manifest them in terms of the old myths—no language of symbol exists in which they can be readily expressed. Paintings such as "Birth," "The Friends of Genius" (Poverty and Disaster), "Chance," "The Wife of Judas," and a score of others confront us with this aspect or that of a powerful imagination that has difficulty in compressing cosmic conceptions or remote spiritual problems into terrestrial or human terms at all. These are wild, weird designs, full of unique psychological interest. If I was asked "What is a Scotsman?" I could scarcely do better than show my interrogator one of these compositions: for that is what they are—so many revelations of that mystery of faculties and inhibitions complex beyond most, the Scots Soul in its Gaelic aspect, or in the occultation of Judea. In them we have the quintessential Stewart Carmichael; manifesting himself in pictures that could only have been painted by a Scottish artist and by no other Scottish artist than himself.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN.

TOWARDS A SCOTTISH NATIONAL DRAMA; "JOHN BRANDANE."

The "facts" in regard to Scottish drama can be readily ascertained by reading Alexander M'Gill's "The Theatre Before the Union" (*Northern Review*, August, 1924); William Power's "The Drama in Scotland" (*Scots Magazine*); Dot Allan's "The Scottish Theatre: A Call for Municipal Effort" (*Review of Reviews*, January, 1924); and Reah Denholm's "The Scottish National Theatre Movement" (*Scots Magazine*). These four articles bound together would form an admirable history of Scottish Drama from the earliest times to the present day—apart, of course, from the drama in Gaelic.

"Scotland alone," Miss Allan observes, "has no real drama of its own. . . . Given this sense of poetry, this hero (Bonnie Prince Charlie) and this heroine (Mary Stuart) ready-made, why has Scotland evolved no drama of its own? To find the answer to this, one must go back to Mary Stuart's own time. She it was who was responsible for the introduction to the Court of Holyrood of the masque, a form of entertainment which provoked the ire of John Knox. But the Queen's reign was brief and her influence was not a lasting one. The spirit of Knox, on the other hand, lived after him. It was the survival of this militant spirit that incited a group of fanatics in Glasgow only a few decades ago to burn down one of the earliest playhouses erected in Scotland as a protest against the visit to their city of the celebrated Mrs Bellamy. . . . In one way, the visit of Mrs Bellamy created a bad precedent. It served to establish the de-



pendency of the Scottish theatre upon that of London, a dependency which to the great detriment of Scottish national drama has endured with occasional bright intervals ever since. In this respect our Scottish cities, it may be retorted, are no worse off than Manchester, Leeds, or many of the other English provincial centres. This argument is, however, beside the mark, inasmuch as save for a matter of mileage, Manchester and Leeds may be regarded as part of the integral whole of the metropolis. What London laughs at, Leeds usually laughs at likewise. This is not so with Scotland. What moves London to mirth moves, on occasion, Edinburgh to tears. Nowhere, in fact, is the difference between English and Scots mentality more sharply defined than in the theatre. It is the failure to recognise this difference that is accountable for a great deal of the bad business done by touring companies in the provinces to-day."

Dealing with the same question, Mr Power says: "Why is it that the Scottish mind, so analytic, individual and sharply picturesque—and Scottish life, so dramatically intense and racy of the soil—have never found expression and reflection in that most characteristic, most spontaneous product of an independent, highly self-conscious race—a national drama? Professor Gregory Smith's theory of a natural impediment needs only to be stated to be instantly dismissed. The Scots, as Froissart remarked long ago, are fonder of pageantry and splendour than the English. When their crust of reserve breaks down under stress of emotion, they reveal themselves as natural actors, quick to exploit a dramatic situation and set it off with vividly picturesque phrases and richly expressive gestures. Nor did Scottish drama perish in the shadow of the great Elizabethans. In the Scotland visited by Ben Jonson there were possibly not half-a-dozen people who had heard of him or of Shakespeare. Scottish drama had already perished. It had been strangled in its cradle by the 'grim Genevan ministers,' the kirk session, and the puritanical and churchified town councils. Both in England and in Scotland puritanism was relentlessly hostile to the stage. But in England it was foiled by the diversity of social interests, the humanist traditions of the universities, the culture of the aristocracy, and, above all, the influence of a monarch who was head of a State Church that represented a successful compromise. In the narrower field of

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Scotland, clerical puritanism, seconded by aristocratic greed, gained a rapid victory and captured the life of the Capital. The Court stood for everything that the mass of the people disliked. The stage was involved in the discredit and defeat of the Court. Along with art, music, dancing and everything intellectual that did not redound directly to the greater glory of Calvinism, the theatre became associated in the popular mind with prelacy, alien aggression and monarchic absolutism. This fatal 'complex,' to use the Freudian term, held the Scottish mind in bondage until the middle of the eighteenth century."

I agree with all this, but would go a little further to account for the absence of any breaking-forth of the long welled-up faculty since the middle of the eighteenth century—a long enough time to recover from the effects of inhibition and make up for lost time. Professor Gregory Smith is not so easily dismissed as Power would have it: the facts he puts forward are "chiels that winna ding"; but they can be taken into account and reconciled with very other conclusions than his. "We need not assume that Puritanical inclemency was the sole cause of disaster. No zealotry could suppress lyric freedom, and the Muse, whether true-love, or light-o'-love, or frankly ribald, inspired the Scot when she willed, and by feeble pens than Burns's, even when the laws of the Righteous were most severe. In Scotland, as elsewhere, drama would have defied all interference, had it outgrown its infant weakness. Though an epidemic Puritanism carried it off, it was from the first, and was destined to remain, even if fate had been kinder, a 'puir shilpet cratur.' The problem is one of family history, rather than of rough handling by the Assembly of the Kirk. . . . It is clear that when the tyranny was least strong, or when, during that tyranny, rebellion was most active, Scottish drama did not find its opportunity. . . . If, therefore, the effect of this superimposed Puritanism may be disregarded, what arguments can be brought forward that the conditions for the growth of a national drama were unfavourable? There is, in the first place, the general consideration which is connected with what has already been said of the familiar and retrospective habits of Scottish literature. These are even less of an aid to the dramatist than to the epic poet,

if they are not accompanied by what is after all the dominant characteristic of drama, the sense of movement and the presentation of that movement in a coherent and, it may be, single action."

Meeting Professor Gregory Smith on his own ground, we can accuse him of having a conception of the drama based mainly on its past exemplification in English—or, at any rate, a conception of the drama at complete variance with that which is emerging in Europe to-day, when those very propensities and tricks of the Scots mentality which were admittedly of little or no use in the creation of drama as hitherto conceived, are in most demand and are rapidly foreshadowing an entirely different *kind* of drama than the world has yet seen—a saltatory development unprecipitated in the past evolution of Drama. It is my belief that the time is only now coming when the Scots psychology can express itself in distinctive and dynamic drama—that it contains forces which can only emerge when the factors which have built up European civilisation as it presently exists exhaust themselves and require to be replaced by the very different forces which they have so long inhibited. In other words, a Spenglerian hypothesis seems to me to fit the facts far better than either that of Mr Power or that of Professor Gregory Smith. Let us see what other evidence is available for anticipating that the psychological moment for Scottish drama has not yet come but is imminent.

The first point is that in the absence of a radical departure from the existing conventions of the theatre, as developed in England and elsewhere in the past, no Scots dramatist has produced drama of the slightest note or in any way other than most superficially differentiated from English drama. This tends to confirm our theory. All the other lets and hindrances to Scottish drama Mr Power and others refer to have disappeared except this psychological deadlock which defies effective resolution along all the customary lines. The fact of the matter is that the very qualities of the Scottish genius which have hitherto warred against its emulation of England in any of the arts are precisely qualities which to-day are in the most significant alignment with all the newest and most promising tendencies in *welt-literatur*. Professor Gregory Smith analyses them admirably in his opening chapter "Two Moods," in which, *inter alia*, he says: "There is more in

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the Scottish antithesis of the real and fantastic than is to be explained by the familiar rules of rhetoric. The sudden jostling of contraries seems to preclude any relationship by literary suggestion. The one invades the other without warning. . . . If a formula is to be found it must explain this strange combination of things unlike, of things seen in an everyday world and things which, like the elf-queen herself, neither earth nor heaven will claim. This mingling, even of the most eccentric kind, is an indication to us that the Scot, in that medieval fashion which takes all things as granted, is at his ease in both 'rooms of life,' and turns to fun, and even profanity, with no misgivings. For Scottish literature is more medieval in habit than criticism has suspected, and owes some part of its picturesque strength to this freedom in passing from one mood to another. It takes some people more time than they can spare to see the absolute propriety of a gargoyles grinning at the elbow of a kneeling saint."

The Scottish National Theatre movement seems singularly blind to the most important thing with regard to its own intentions which a study of Scottish psychological and cultural history has to show; and the majority of those who are setting themselves out as Scottish dramatists to-day are at the furthest remove from that *Expressionismus* through which lies the only possibility of liberating any Scots Drama worthy of the name.

The lesson is plain enough for all who run to read, and has recently been most pointedly emphasised by one of the most brilliant of our younger Scots, Professor Allardyce Nicoll in his history of "British Drama." (Messrs Harrap, 1925.) His last chapter may well be read by any would-be Scots dramatist in conjunction with a careful re-reading of the chapter from Professor Gregory Smith I have just been quoting. It shows the only way out for the ultimate manifestation of Scots genius in drama of a major kind—the only way to prevent that relegation of the Scottish contribution to future arts and letters to the minor rôle Professor Gregory Smith confidently prophesies for it. Surveying contemporary tendencies, Professor Nicoll observes in serious drama and in comedy the union of actual life with something outside the ordinary world, literally supernatural or

imaginatively fanciful, and expresses the opinion that drama will turn from naturalism towards fantasy, and an imaginative treatment of real life. Herein undoubtedly lies the great opportunity for Scottish genius.

"John Brandane" (Dr John MacIntyre) has won wide recognition as the finest dramatist the Scottish National Theatre movement has as yet produced—and he is. There could be no shrewder condemnation of the movement. For precisely the same reason that most people commend his plays, I am constrained to condemn them as manifestly unScottish—marking not a salient accomplishment in the movement towards a Scottish drama, but, on the contrary, proving a grave misdirection. Brandane's work has neither of the two characteristics of Scottish genius (let alone both of them)—excessive particularism or unpredictable fantasy. If it had shrewdly got at the factors which have so long inhibited Scottish genius, and are still so largely inhibiting it, there would have been extreme resistance to it. But it has occasioned no indignation. In other words, it has not touched the roots of our national being. Mr Lennox Robinson accounts Mr Brandane one of the first half-dozen playwrights of the younger British school, along with Noel Coward, Sean Casey, and others. Perhaps he is. Coward and one or two others of Mr Robinson's team seem to me exceedingly small fry. But there is one thing the other five all have in varying degree that Brandane lacks—and that is contemporaneity. They all represent recognisable movements in drama, related to the *Zeitgeist*, observable internationally in all the arts. The content of Brandane's work on the contrary is negligible save for the purposes of entertainment. He originates nothing: he makes no intriguing departures: he says nothing that is not superficial: he never comes to grips with real life: there is nothing that one can seize on and say "this is quintessential Brandane—there is no mistaking it." As a matter of fact his plays might have been written as far back as 1875; they reflect nothing that has happened since then in human life and thought or in the evolution of the drama, save perhaps in a little trick here and there of stage technique—which is a very different thing from dramatic technique. It is just here perhaps that we come to grips with Brandane. He has a sound knowledge of the theatre—but has no great dramatic gift; he is a better stage-technician than he is a writer. He

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has nothing to say—but he knows how to say it. His work is extremely thin, conventional, and unimportant—but it is put together in a thoroughly competent and business-like fashion. It is in point of literary quality precisely equal to that—not of people like Bernard Shaw, Granville Barker, Galsworthy, nor yet of the newer men like Richard Hughes, Caradoc Evans, and so forth—but of that intermediate type of dramatist who is never named in any serious discussion of tendencies, who really does not count except at the ticket-box, the undifferentiated purveyor of assorted entertainments to the mass—men like (it is difficult to recall their names) the authors of "Charley's Aunt" and "When Knights were Bold," and a score of other quite successful, if less sensationally successful, productions. And it is precisely a playwright of this kind we would expect to be at the head of the Scottish Players' efforts. These efforts are directed simply and solely to produce the same sort of thing as is being, or has been, produced in English Repertory Theatres, or at the Abbey Theatre, give it a little Scottish local colour, and call it Scottish National Drama. But it is not in this way that anything of national consequence is done. Nothing the Scottish Players have done has given the slightest impression of a long-inhibited faculty suddenly asserting itself—no issue has been forced with the national consciousness—no bearing upon the national life has been developed. I am not pleading for propagandist plays: but for something deeper than propaganda—a sense of destiny realising itself, an effect of influence, the consciousness of a radical difference because we have at last obtained what we have so long, inexplicably and unfortunately, lacked, a feeling that fundamental factors are at work. Brandane's plays disengage nothing of the kind. It is not on the strength of such plays that Scotland will acquire a place in any study of the tendencies at work in contemporary drama. There are no tendencies at work in Scottish drama so far as Brandane's plays are concerned (and Brandane is our greatest dramatist): Scots psychology remains outwith the scope of drama in any sense worth mentioning.

Brandane's work may, however, serve as a reminder that mere technical competence, mere acquaintance with



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Scottish history or Scottish life and character in this district or that, mere clever dialogue and so forth will not suffice to create Scots Drama—unless there is a powerful impulse at work, expressing itself through the distinctive factors of Scottish psychology, in its own inimitable fashion, at the right time. Given the latter all the attributes of the clever craftsman may or may not be found also; that is a matter of comparative unimportance.

As a matter of fact Brandane has almost all the qualities or accomplishments of a perfect dramatist according to the text-books. He merely lacks the smallest glint of genius, and the slightest element of topicality—not topicality in the usual sense, but timeliness with reference to the real needs of the national life, those requirements, conscious or unconscious, which a real Scots National Drama would help to meet. As it is, I am of the opinion that despite all its technical finish, Brandane's work signifies the futility of seeking to find Scots National Drama along the lines the Scottish Stage Society are going. It is, of its kind, a fine enough performance, but it is destitute of promise. One has only to think of the kind of ideas any great dramatist deals with—their tremendous germinative power, their relevance to the major problems of humanity, and, generally, to the deeper and more particular problems of a given people, their originative and tendentious power—to see Brandane in his true light, and to see the justice of St John Ervine's remark that "the best that Glasgow can do in the way of a repertory theatre is an occasional performance by the Scottish National Players, whose title is a trifle grandiloquent, considering the extent of their operations."

Mr Alexander M'Gill, in an article on "The Plays of John Brandane" (*Northern Review*, May, 1924) showed that a healthy dissatisfaction exists in certain quarters; "Unfortunately, it is not the big play which the theatre is looking for—a little amateurish touch here and there would have been forgiven for the sake of some body or strength in the play," he observed of Brandane's four-act Highland comedy, *Full Fathom Five*, and concluded however that "we must admit that John Brandane is the biggest man the theatre has produced, but that his biggest work is *The Glen is Mine*." I do not think there can be any difference of opinion as to this—but *The Glen is Mine* stands in no dynamic relationship to the Scots Soul and



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the psychological moment—it makes an excellent entertainment but sets no leaven to work in the national life. And I frankly disbelieve in its "exquisite Celtic idiom, as pure and expressive as Synge's use of the Anglo-Irish speech," as H. N. Brailsford calls it. Is it more than the language of the "Celtic Twilight" Scotified—a derivation from Ossian, Fiona M'Leod, and Neil Munro and various Irish writers rather than from real life or first-hand imagination?

Mr Brandane's novels resemble his plays—they are readable, and Scottish in subject and setting, but in nothing deeper, and belong, to my mind, to a great body of books of a very workmanlike kind which perish annually for lack of any deeper quality than the many excellent but yet unavailing qualities they possess.

*Mr Brandane's novels are "The Lady of Aros" and "The Captain More." Two of his plays are published in a volume issued by Messrs Constable—"The Glen is Mine" and "The Lifting" (1925).*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT.

### OTHER DRAMATISTS.

Mistaken—fundamentally mistaken—as I believe the policy of the Scottish National Players to be, it must not be assumed that I question the integrity, the genuine enthusiasm, and the patient courage of some of the promoters of the Movement. For Mr D. Glen Mackemmie, the Chairman of the Scottish National Theatre Society, at any rate, I have the highest respect. He has done splendid service in this and other directions in relation to Scottish national effort over a long period of years, and has never had anything like the backing and recognition he should have had. Although the claims that have been made in certain quarters for the Scottish National Players (including the claim embodied in the name) are hopelessly unwarranted, what they have done has, in contrast with the bulk of the other dramatic fare on offer in Scotland, deserved, for its own sake apart from its nationalistic appeal altogether, ten times the support it has received; and if the title assumed is exceedingly hyperbolic it must, at any rate, be conceded that there is no other combination that has anything approaching the same claim to it on actual performance—yet. At the very lowest estimate the Scottish National Players' enterprise may transpire to have initiated in regard to Scottish Drama those indirections by which directions may ultimately be discovered. Their work will have its alternative value for more radical experimenters. From this point of view, if from no other, it may be wished that a greater measure of achievement and popular attention had attended these

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efforts, and that a more substantial repertory had accrued to their credit. As matters are, however, they have scarcely provided an effective point of departure for their successors. In almost every respect, they afford negative rather than positive grounds for difference. Possibly, after all, the greatest service they have done is simply to have given currency to the words "Scottish National Drama"—a service not altogether set-off by what they have provided in name thereof.

Nothing need be said of any of the players themselves. The measure of their achievement—or lack of achievement—is that none of them has become a name outside a very small circle. To Scotland as a whole—to furth of Scotland still less—has any of them become what the brothers Fay and others quickly became for the Abbey Theatre. The Scottish National Players remain an anonymous body. No histrionic any more than any dramatic genius has emerged. Nor has any recognisably distinctive Scottish school or mode of acting been built up.

"Spectator" in a recent "Irish Statesman" recalls "a conversation I had recently with a youthful friend who was sternly critical of the manifold imperfections of Irish drama. I forget what particular brand of expressionism he favoured, but to clear the way for it he made plain to me, in the wholesome fashion adopted by youth for the chastening of middle age, that the gods of my dramatic idolatry were fit only for the scrap-heap. Synge was too obvious and Yeats too remote, and while he grudgingly admitted that Lennox Robinson and Seán O'Casey knew something about the theatre, he had no hope that they would lead us into the promised land. In despair I urged that if the Abbey playwrights were not so good as they ought to be they were at least an improvement on what had gone before. 'Isn't it something,' I pleaded, 'to have delivered us from the stage Irishman?' He looked at me with a puzzled air. 'What was the stage Irishman?' he asked. If the coming-of-age performances included a specimen of the sort of drama the Abbey superseded I think critics of the theatre would see in truer perspective the reality of the revolution effected by the Irish dramatic movement." May be! But nothing of the kind can be urged yet in favour of the Scottish National Players. They have not delivered us from the stage Scotsman. They have only subtilised him a little, and made him thereby the more difficult to get rid of.

Apart from Brandane and Malloch no other playwright claims any attention, but several plays do. I am not to concede here that any writer who writes a play or two plays—even if they are very good plays—becomes *ipse facto* a dramatist. On the contrary. The production of one or two plays, however good in themselves, may prove precisely that their writer is not a dramatist. Malloch and Brandane have both a sufficient number of plays to their credit to entitle them to be regarded as contemporary Scottish dramatists: but each of them has done far less in this direction than a writer requires to do in most countries before his pretensions can hope to secure serious consideration. The comparatively little they have done, all on a minor scale at that, is in itself a proof of the meagreness of their inspiration: and in respect of quality nothing either of them have done would lift them above a densely populated ruck of playwrights in any other civilised country. In Scotland, however, they stand out as positive phenomena. Graver even than their deficiencies in quantity and quality is the fact that their plays are of kinds in which sheafs of better plays have been done almost everywhere else, and that fundamentally there is little that is distinctively Scottish in them. Nor do they—Brandane's at any rate; Malloch is a little better in this respect in "The House or the Queen" and "Soutariness Water"—represent any real effort to deal with the basic difficulties of establishing a distinctive and dynamic Scots drama. Having thus "scaled down" Brandane and Malloch to their real proportions, and found them of exceedingly puny stature, our other dramatists, proportionately reduced, become scarcely discernible.

J. A. Ferguson is the author of three plays: and on the basis I have been indicating that makes him, other things being equal, entitled to be accredited with rather less than half the stature of Brandane or Malloch. Other things, however, are not quite equal. Both Brandane and Malloch have quite a tale of work to their credit on a higher plane (in like categories) than Ferguson's "The King of Morven" and "The Scarecrow." But "Campbell of Kilmhor" (produced in the spring of 1914) is, in its way, as good as anything either Brandane or Malloch have produced. No anthology of the Best Contemporary Scottish Plays could omit it—any more than they could omit Naomi Jacob's "The Dawn." But Naomi Jacob is even

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less of a dramatist than Ferguson. George Blake's "The Mother" would be included in that volume, too, but what else? Robert Bain's "James I." (which William Power has well said is next to John Davidson's "Bruce"—which ought to be revived—our best historical play) and the same author's "Punch Counts Ten" and G. W. Shirley's "The '45; Prince Charlie at Dumfries." These six, with perhaps three each by Malloch and Brandane, would produce a volume which compared with a similar volume of the twelve best plays by contemporary authors of any other European country would be—just presentable and no more, excusable on the ground that the evolution of a Scots National Drama is just commencing, and that there are still many factors to stunt and delimit and emasculate it which have to be contended against in no other country. These twelve just emerge into the region of what can be admitted as nationally representative—as slightly better than nothing—and as internationally presentable in company where Scotland's special lets and hindrances are understood and due allowances are made. Either as nationally representative or internationally presentable, all the other plays that have been written during this first quarter of the twentieth century are negligible. At the same time, I may hazard the view that the source of the next advance towards Scots Drama will be from the growing mass of village dramas which are being produced—crude, unsatisfactory as yet but racy of the soil—from these, and from the sort of thing, a medley of fantasy and realism, Mr Bain has initiated in "Punch Counts Ten," rather than from any of the others.

Of Mr Shirley's play—and here again a fertile and promising vista is disclosed—the *Glasgow Herald* justly said: "Perhaps the greatest interest of the play is to be found in the successful use which the author makes of the old vernacular, in which he has chosen to develop his theme. The problem of appropriate speech is one of the oldest difficulties of the writer of historical drama. Where the claims of complete realism demand the employment of words and forms of speech which have gone out of general use, the solution of the problem must always be a compromise in a work designed for effective stage production. Mr Shirley has not permitted himself so much licence in that respect as has been generally allowed dramatic writers, but his solution is still a compromise. He uses

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a form of Scots sufficiently old to help him to secure his atmosphere, but not so antique that it cannot be readily understood by most of his present-day townsmen at least, although a few words and phrases may have escaped some of the audience at the first performance of the work. Any loss of dramatic effectiveness which was thus caused is, however, counterbalanced by the value which his work may have in the stimulation of the movement for the study of the Scottish vernacular, of which the drama can be a potent instrument."

The importance of this language issue cannot, in fact, be over-emphasised. No doubt Mr Shirley had many wise counsellors who advised him to tone down, or eliminate, his archaisms. Probably he had difficulty with some of the members of the Dumfries Guild who produced it. But he was well-advised to stick to his guns, and in so doing, he may well, unobtrusively but yet effectively, have helped to mark a very necessary turning-point in the movement towards a Scots Drama—a turning-point which I hope the announcement of the Scottish National Players that they are shortly to produce Malloch's "Soutarness Water"—its writer's finest play and his first in Braid Scots (Is there no relation between these facts?)—means has now been definitely taken.

In another respect the production of "Soutarness Water" may mark an important turning-point in the development of the movement—a break with the stultifying respectability that has hitherto characterised it. The Play-Reading and Selecting Committee have obviously been in the throes of a crisis in connection with it. But the right side has triumphed. From what I know of the composition of the Committee in question I am frankly surprised. In this connection, Gordon Bottomley says: "There is no doubt about this play. It is probably the most important and significant thing that has happened in Scottish literature since 'The House with the Green Shutters,' and it is much better than that because its intention is less predominantly sensational. It is an admirable work by a man who is going to count. I believe that the Scottish National Theatre Society cannot turn such a play down without discrediting itself in the eyes of the future and disqualifying itself in the eyes of those Scotsmen in whom its deepest hope lies at present." Mr William Power also says that it is "in all respects one of the most powerful

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dialect plays I have ever read. . . . If the Scottish National Players cannot present this play, it were better that they should disband forthwith; and a Society that can be kept together only by the support of the kind of people who object to this play is of no conceivable service to Scottish drama."

There is no need to make such a mountain of such a molehill. The play is not a great one—except in relation to the present state of Scottish drama. It would not deserve a couple of lines in Huntley Carter's great survey of the Contemporary European Theatre. But the rout of its moralitarian opponents, and the decision to produce it, are welcome and unlooked-for signs of vigour. The Scottish National Players may yet find themselves. This is practically a first step in the right direction—and one that helps to counterbalance so far as Glasgow is concerned the recent stupid banning of "Theism and Atheism" from the public libraries.

I do not like Mr Power's commendation of "Soutar-ness Water," however, on the grounds that "the language is direct and picturesque—there is no padding." That is precisely what is wrong with it from the point of view of the possible new kind of drama which shall address itself to Scots psychology. In this connection straight technique will not help. Chekhov is the dramatist who should be studied. He has more than any other to teach the true Scots playwright. His indirect method—his oblique dialogue—his use of irrelevancies consist with the complex cautious Scots mind. The future of the Scots theatre lies in practically actionless drama, and the employment of expressionist technique to express the undemonstrative monosyllabic subtlety of the Scot.

It is to be hoped, however, that the production of "Soutar-ness Water" will lead to an explosion of opinion. It will help to clear the air. It will force the leaders of the movement into the open in a decisive national way, and put an end to "hole-and-corner methods" and the tendency to remain a species of Tooley Street Tailor which has hitherto characterised them. It is time those of them who have any weight were making it felt against real odds.

A Braid Scots dramatist of promise is Alexander M'Gill, whose "Pardon in the Morning" has been produced by the Lennox Players and whose "Tribute" shortly will be. Both of these are in the Renfrewshire dialect.



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Neither deserve inclusion in the anthology of which I have spoken: but they are both sufficiently good—sufficiently above the great mass of Braid Scots plays which have been written in recent years—to justify the hope that here we have developing a dramatist in Scots who will come to bulk largely in any view of our subject in this second quarter of the century.

M'Gill's "*Pardon in the Morning*" appeared in "*The Northern Review*" (June-July, 1924) and Naomi Jacob's "*The Dawn*" in "*The Northern Review*" (August, 1924). Miss Irene F. M. Dean contributed an informative article on "*J. A. Ferguson: Dramatist and Novelist*" to "*The Scottish Educational Journal*" (September 4, 1925), and Dr G. P. Insh had an article on Robert Bain in the same journal on July 10, 1925.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE.

"SWATCHES O' HAMESPUN."

Observing that the present century has witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in the Scots Vernacular, which has taken several forms, lexical, dramatic, and poetic, a writer on the subject of "A Scottish Renaissance" in the *Times Literary Supplement* (January 7, 1926) rightly points out that there is nothing to prevent the successful revival of Scots as a general literary instrument, given a sufficiently strong nationalistic impulse. But that is the great *sine qua non*. Unfortunately the great majority of those who are concerned in the movement to revive Braid Scots have not come to understand this: and those who endeavour to point it out to them are accused of mixing up politics and letters. "In our own time," says the writer in question, "Norse, Frisian, Afrikaans, not to speak of Welsh and Erse, have shown what a few resolute can accomplish when carried forward on a strong wave of national or local sentiment. But such a wave there must be. The literary severance of Norway from Denmark was due to the same forces that presently brought about its political separation from Sweden. Without such forces—and there is little sign of them in Scotland—the aspiration after a *general* revival of literary Scots will remain a dream." I do not agree with him that there is little sign of the generation of such forces in Scotland to-day. I believe, on the contrary, that saltatory developments are impending. But whether or not, the fact remains that no one who is chiefly concerned with the problems of transcending the present limitations of distinctively Scottish

letters—no one who is unwilling to see Scottish genius permanently subordinated to English, and Scottish psychology prevented from expressing itself save indirectly through an alien medium arbitrarily interposed between it and the world—can remain indifferent to the political implications of any movement worthy of the name, to revive Braid Scots. A Vernacular revivalist who is not also a Scottish separatist is a contradiction in terms. But the fact remains that the majority of our self-styled Vernacular revivalists have failed to think out the pre-requisites to the success of the movement which they think they are promoting by their negligible sentimentalisms, and they are actually in the anomalous position of paying lip-service to the "mither-tongue" at the very same time that they are stereotyping the conditions which have led to its desuetude. The same writer reveals another radical inconsistency in their position when he points out that "Unhappily, Scots has kept humble company so long that it has not only suffered impoverishment in its vocabulary, but contracted associations too homely, too trivial, sometimes too vulgar for high poetry. If it is to be used again for that purpose, at least on a grand scale, it must break these low associations and form new. In other words, he who aspires to reform Scots poetry must first do what Spenser did for English; he must create a new poetic diction. . . . The example of Burns does not greatly help. It is true that Burns, by reinforcing traditional Scots from his own 'hamely Westlan'' dialect, did not apply it to new purposes." He goes on to show that the only way is to, quite arbitrarily, create a synthetic Scots, founding on the traditional Lothian Scots, but admitting good Scots words from any quarter. "This was how Aasen went about it with Norse. . . . Obsolete words revived have at first neither meaning nor associations except for the scholar; yet if they are good words they may take root and blossom afresh; there is nothing for it but time and use." And, in conclusion, he refers to "the faith without which there can be no conquest: the belief that Scotland still has something to say to the imagination of mankind, something that she alone among the nations can say, and can say only in her native tongue."

In these sentences he has penetrated to the heart of the whole issue. But the majority of our vernacular enthusiasts, especially those in the North-East corner,

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think otherwise. They are humble people—who have resigned themselves to the belief that only the lowliest literary rôle confronts the Doric—not too lowly, however, for such despisers of highbrowism as themselves, who, indeed, have so little interest in or knowledge of literary matters as such that, as by the hand of one of their leaders, Dr J. M. Bulloch, they have declared, their principal reason for desiring to revive the Buchan dialect as a literary medium is simply because it is only, so far as they know or wish to know, capable of being used in a fashion that is beneath criticism. They do not wish to say anything to the imagination of mankind. All that they want is a little private "stunt" of their own, that demands nothing beyond an average hind's sensibilities, in the prosecution of which they can forget that feeling of inferiority with which they are afflicted when genuine artistic considerations are being canvassed. This is the worst form of highbrowism inverted. It is indeed worse than any form of highbrowism, for highbrowism does make certain demands on its devotees. It is natural, therefore, that the majority of Buchan vernacular enthusiasts should be successful London Scots who, under a guise of local patriotism, are glad to make a virtue of their constitutional incapacity for culture of any kind, and so, in the company of their kind, get rid of the oppressive sense of spiritual inferiority, so galling to those who have been merely commercially successful, which afflicts them in the presence of those incomprehensible people they encounter here and there who are really artistic. The strain of living in an educated world makes them glad to relapse from time to time to the levels of the ploughman or the fishwife. The accuracy of this diagnosis will be apparent when it is remembered that the stock argument of these people is that the desuetude of the vernacular is due to "superior people who consider it vulgar."

Mr William Will, for example, has recently been telling the Vernacular Circle of the London Burns Club that the Doric was not dying from natural causes, but was being bludgeoned out of existence by miserable purse-proud specimens of our fellow-countrymen. I am convinced that on the contrary more harm is being done to Braid Scots by some of its supposed friends, and the poverty-stricken stuff they laud in the name of it, than by those who are openly contemptuous of it. The leaders of the London

Vernacular Circle (who are wealthier than nine-tenths of the poets and prosewriters of Scotland from Dunbar to Burns inclusive put together) are doing nothing to help such efforts as are being made in various quarters to revive Braid Scots as an instrument of literary expression—least of all are they bringing any worthy sense of literary values to bear on the matter. They are not concerned with anything so un-Scottish as literary values. On the contrary they are intent upon stereotyping the very ideas and attitudes to art that have been mainly responsible for its deterioration and desuetude than about reviving the Doric *per se*. The Doric will only revive if the very opposite spirit to theirs can be brought to bear, and if it can be made a fit medium for all-round expression of the modern Scottish mind. If it cannot we must reconcile ourselves to permanent cultural subordination to England and the progressive distortion and falsification of our faculties of expression. But it unquestionably can—given the right spirit. It is absurd to try to tie down the Scottish mind at this time of day to the groove of Johnny Gibb o' Gushet-neuk. If Braid Scots is to become a living thing again it must be developed to correspond to the suppressed elements of Scottish psychology in ways of which English is incapable, and not be identified exclusively with the cult of mediocrity to which Aberdonians in particular have so largely committed themselves. Any young Scot with literary powers which he wishes to dedicate to his native country can have no more disheartening experience than to come in contact with the kind of ideas on cultural matters entertained by the London Vernacular Circle and their equivalents in Scotland, and will certainly receive no encouragement from these people unless he falls in both with their petty moral prejudices and lack of interest in anything that is not of a wholly kailyaird order. From the Renaissance point of view, on the contrary, it is claimed that it is utterly wrong to make the term "Scottish" synonymous with any fixed literary forms or to attempt to confine it to any particular creed or set of ideas—let alone to such notions as are really part and parcel of Scottish degeneration and provincialisation. That is to deny it the very characteristics of a living and sovereign thing; and yet that is what the majority of our so-called vernacular enthusiasts are doing.

The Scottish Renaissance movement, on the contrary,

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sets out to do all that it possibly can to increase the number of Scots who are vitally interested in literature and cultural issues; to counter those academic or merely professional tendencies which fossilise the intellectual interests of most well-educated people even; and, above all, to stimulate actual art-production to a maximum. Obviously one of the ways in which this can be done is to attack and break up the preconceptions responsible for the existing state of affairs, whatever they may be—religious, political, commercial, social or otherwise; and to those who resent our doing this in one direction or another all we say is—"Prove to us that this or that convention or moral prejudice or political interest is of more ultimate consequence to the people than that spiritual liberation which the production and enjoyment of art involves, and we will refrain from our attack upon it." The Renaissance demand is simply that, whatever the causes of the stunting and provincialisation of the Scottish arts may be, they must be removed, and forces must be substituted for them which will have the contrary effect of stimulating the art-producing, and art-enjoying, faculties of our nation to the uttermost. Scotland may be, let us concede, all that it should be morally and politically and educationally—but it is emphatically not so artistically; and it is necessary to experiment fearlessly to find out why, and apply the necessary remedy.

Carlyle said that if Burns had been a first-class intellectual workman he might have changed the whole course of British literary history. The question is whether that cannot still be done—whether it is not even necessary in the interests of English, let alone Scottish, literature. It depends upon what you think of English literature, and particularly the present position and prospects of English literature. The thing that mainly interests me is the extent, as Professor Saintsbury has pointed out, to which English has been adscripted to a certain broad attitude to things which has its own great merits, but also its own demerits, and which certainly acts as a sort of censor to prevent the successful exploitation in English letters of the particular kind of moral and psychological and aesthetic issues with which the Scottish genius is best fitted to deal, and the canvassing of which is the most significant feature of certain other literatures to-day—a feature which brings the literatures in question into much more vital alignment

with the trend of science, and life, to-day than English literature is. The ambition to thus reorient English literature—to give the Scottish partner in the unequal alliance that predominance which has hitherto been the prerogative of the Southern partner—may seem to Englishmen an impertinent and unwarrantable one; but surely no Scotsmen can deny that it is infinitely more in keeping with Scottish national dignity than the cultural subservience we have hitherto shown, and generally excused on materialistic grounds—an excuse which affords singularly little satisfaction to-day when the state of our industry and commerce suggests that a reconsideration of the bargain is long overdue.

But the enthusiasts in the North-East corner will have none of this. All they want is "Swatches o' Hamespun." Their ideas are beyond the wildest farrago with which Mencken has ever enriched his delectable *Americana*. Here is an example—part of a protest against the attempts that have been made to bring Scotland into fresh relationships with the culture of Europe. As Professor Hugh Walker has put it: "People who keep pigeons have discovered that from time to time they must bring eggs from a neighbouring dovecot if they wish to keep up the excellence of their birds. If pigeon fanciers are too exclusive, and refrain from all exchange of eggs, their stock will weaken and ultimately die out. A like fate, De Quincey thinks, awaits the literature of any country which is preserved from all foreign intercourse. He says that every literature, unless it be crossed by some other of a different breed, tends to superannuation. Writing nearly a century ago, in 1821, he asks what, with this example before our eyes, the English should do, and answers, 'Evidently we should cultivate an intercourse with that literature of Europe which has most of a juvenile constitution.'" Sound advice—and precisely what is now being advocated and attempted in regard to Scots literature. But the North-Easterners cannot distinguish between this and imitation—as if each nation had not, as Professor J. H. Morgan puts it in his book on "John Morley," "its own *Zeitgeist* which assimilates in its own way the ideas it borrows from elsewhere. This 'time-spirit' is forever transforming what it works upon. A people's power over an idea is limited by its own past." Scotland's past is such that we can intromit very actively with all manner of foreign litera-



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tures for many decades to come without jeopardising our "ethnic substance." But the enthusiast to whom I have referred writes: "*Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky, Gorki, etc., etc., are either decadent or impossible.* I am not speaking at hazard, and have read enough of them, in the original, to know that the Scottish national ego, new or old, is as far as the poles from them. No rapprochement is possible. There are not—and cannot be—any points of contact between Scottish and Russian cultural feeling, or, rather, national soul. In spite of the abundant nonsense written every day about the Auld Alliance, etc., the Scots and French brains are as unlike as can be. The French brain works in a unique way. This is well-evidenced by their *total inability to grasp* (the italics are his own here) elementary canons of gratitude, the discharge of obligations, and other things that right-thinking nations associate with *honour*. Their literature is great in beauty, in cosmopolitan value in many directions, but the precept 'It is righteousness that exalteth a nation' will forbid Scots, I hope, from ever getting permeated with the Gallic sexual streak." Comment is superfluous.

It is not surprising to find, in conjunction with such an attitude, the feeling that "surely from the vernacular point of view such a line as

' For a daidlin', toitin' sharger, an' an  
eeseless, smearless smatchet '

is hard to equal." I would fain hope that it might prove so. The same writer says (in the preface to the first series of "Swatches o' Hamespun" 1921, Banffshire Journal Limited) "The subjects dealt with are homely—the dialect is not suited for the handling of subjects other than these." English as used by chaw-bacons might be confined to like subjects and not seem suited for anything else—but it would not be the fault of English. Nor is it the fault of Scots that the New Byth people make the poverty-stricken use of it that they do. In the preface to the Third Series we are not surprised to read: "The people who use the dialect are douce, decent folk who do not pose as humorists." . . . . But they will not be the only people in Scotland who will fail to see the joke in these quotations!

## CHAPTER THIRTY

THE HON. RUARAI DH ERSKINE OF MARR.

The same type of person as fought for the Freedom of the Press is to-day recognising the need for its regulation in the interests of the integrity of thought and public opinion. The claim that newspapers are private businesses to be run in any way their proprietors think fit is untenable. To a very large extent to-day capital is being used through the medium of newspaper proprietorship to debauch the public mind in the most unscrupulous fashion and with the meanest motives. In a real sense there is no Freedom of the Press in Great Britain to-day. A Government which spends scores of millions of pounds annually on compulsory education cannot remain permanently indifferent to the extent to which that expenditure is stultified by "the New Journalism." At the same time that the Press is exercising an utterly unwholesome influence in certain directions—and on certain sections of the public—it is largely ceasing to exercise—or to exercise effectively and in a desirable fashion—what ought to be its principal functions. Its news is as bad as its views. It is dominated not by journalists with any professional code, but by "the commercial side": and its claim to decide what shall or shall not be reported solely by what it calls its "sense of news-values" is undermined by the fact that that "sense" itself is dictated nowadays by anything rather than a broad concern for the public good. This base making and manipulation of public opinion must be terminated. Democracy is practically divisible to-day into the unthinking mob moved this way and that by the stuntist Press, on the one

hand, and, on the other, the almost equally large proportion of the population who have ceased to "pay any attention to what the papers say" and make up their minds on the main issues in current affairs independently of them, and, for the most part, in spite of them. It is, for example, an utterly anomalous thing that practically the entire Scottish Press should be anti-Socialist and engaged upon continuous misrepresentation of the Socialist position, while a third of the population are Socialist voters. It is again utterly anomalous that practically all the Scottish papers deride the Scottish Home Rule programme as the farcical demand of a handful of fanatics, while Bill after Bill to confer measures of self-government upon Scotland again have been thrown out of the House of Commons by the English majority despite the fact that they have been supported by an ever-increasing majority of the Scottish representation of all parties. Do the Scottish people want Home Rule? The papers, which tell us that they do not, are the very papers whose columns are closed to any debate on the subject and which have studiously refrained for decades to do what the Press of every other country does—hold a watching brief for the national interests and maintain a continuous audit into all the departments of the country's affairs. Who has ever seen in any Scottish paper competent articles, with detailed statistics, upon any phase of our industry or commerce *from a purely national standpoint*—that is to say, so set out as to discriminate between Scottish and English (or, if you prefer it, Scottish and British) interests? Anyone who is in the habit of writing to the papers on Scottish issues knows what the taboos are. "Thus far and no further" he may go—and "thus far" falls short of the distance at which he would be in a position to deal effectively with the continual ridicule to which the very idea of Scottish Home Rule is persistently subjected. The fact of the matter is that the existing Press has its vested interests in the maintenance of the *status quo*—it is a product of the existing state of affairs—and under the present economic order it is practically impossible to establish a free Press. It cannot contend against the Press that already exists as a product or accessory of business interests dependent upon the present order. Business so dominates the matter that a detached multi-millionaire to-day might readily sink his entire fortune in endeavouring to run a

daily paper in favour of, say, a Scots Free State, even supposing it got at the outset and maintained as long as it lasted more readers than any two other daily papers in Scotland combined. Established business to-day has a power to which public opinion is practically irrelevant. It cannot prevent the growth of public opinion in directions to which it is opposed, but it can prevent or indefinitely delay the effective organisation of the public opinion in question. That is the position of the great mass of Scottish nationalist opinion in Scotland to-day: and how to enable it to express itself when all the means of expression are monopolised by the English or Anglo-Scottish opposition is the problem.

These considerations, baldly set forth, come to my mind as I start to write of the Hon Ruairaidh Stuart Erskine of Marr. His significance arises from the fact that he embodies in himself the antitheses of all the tendencies which led to the Union and have since fostered the inherent tendency of the Union—the complete assimilation of Scotland to England. It is easy to understand to what an extent such a phenomenon has become the target of all whose enmity is aroused by the slightest divergence from the normal. He has been persistently derided and insulted and denounced by all the anonymous nonentities who staff the Anglo-Scottish Press. But despite them, and the overwhelming odds confronting his programme (the restoration of Scottish independence, and of Gaelic culture in Scotland), he has maintained decade after decade a propaganda which the Press might keep subterranean, but to which they could not deny an ultimate ubiquity. He has never lacked the courage of his convictions; his consistency has been unimpeachable, and his tenacity marvellous. To-day he is beginning to reap the reward of his labours. Already popular opinion in Scotland has veered round to a very large extent to the attitude he adopted to the War, for example. His persistent propaganda has at last taken shape in what is the most promising nationalist organisation that has been formed in Scotland since the Union—the Scottish National League. At present he has no organ of his own. His journalistic enterprises have been many—annuals, quarterlies, monthlies, weeklies. They have served to keep the fire of Scottish nationalism alight. The two most important were *Guth na Bliadha*, a beautifully produced Gaelic quarterly

and practically the sole repository of contemporary Gaelic arts and letters of the slightest consequence; and *The Scottish Review*, the files of which are indispensable to students of Scottish affairs and hold masses of information inaccessible or very difficult of access elsewhere. Both were heroic examples of the art of swimming against the current. In both cases the literary resource of their editor and proprietor was outstandingly evident. He was the founder, too, of Ard-Chomhairle na Gaidhlig (the Gaelic Academy) and Comunn Litreachais na h-Albann (the Society of Scottish letters). It is interesting to observe that just as the latest organisation with which he is identified, the Scots National League, is by far the most promising and powerful, so, just at the moment when he has again suspended the last of his periodicals, it is becoming increasingly clear that tendencies in contemporary newspaper trustification are leading to a reorientation of the attitude of certain Scottish newspapers to Scottish nationalism—a tendency attributable in part, too, to the effect other recent amalgamations of English and Scottish interests, with centralisation in London, has had upon the business of the papers in question. These newspapers are not insensible to the conjunction of the adverse effect of recent tendencies in affairs on Scottish interests with a rising tide of nationalism in the minds of the people as a whole. The result of this, at the very least, will be to make Scottish nationalist journalism and periodical enterprise easier than it has hitherto been. The result may also be that in quarters that ten years ago would have seemed exceedingly unlikely, Mr Erskine may at last be accorded some recognition for what he is—one of our ablest and most disinterested publicists; one of our most distinguished litterateurs; a man of wide knowledge, versatile accomplishment and great charm and fineness of character; and, above all, a Scot who has maintained intact in himself, if nowhere else, the indefeasible unity of Scotland, its sovereign independence, and a centre in which the “Anima Celtica” has lain in no spell-bound trance, but continued to function, if not freely, faithfully. I account him one of the most remarkable personalities of modern Scottish history, the very core and crux of the *Gaeltacht*. It is too early yet to see his political and cultural activities in proper perspective, but I am confident that an adequate lapse of time will serve

to correct the general view as to the validity and value of his views on all matters affecting Scottish interests just as the post-War period has already slewed round large bodies of opinion, very differently disposed at the time, to substantially the same position as Mr Erskine adopted to the War while it was still being waged.

But there is another respect in which he is remote from the generality, despite the rapid decay of materialism within the past few years. "He has attempted" (as Professor Mackinnon said of the Highlander, in his inaugural address on his succession to the Celtic Chair at Edinburgh University), "not unsuccessfully, to live not for the day and hour alone, but, in a true sense, to live the life of the spirit." Apart from a steady stream of political articles and correspondence, he has maintained a regular flow of imaginative prose studies, plays, etc., both in Gaelic and in English. Gaelic letters have been cut off, pretty much as Braid Scots have been but to somewhat different effect (there is a difference between Kailyairdism and Celtic Twilightism) from contact with European culture on the one hand and the practical life of the people on the other. The bulk of the Gaelic movement, as represented in the various Highland Societies, etc., is a purely sentimental thing, divorced from reality, and headed by the very people who have eviscerated the economic life of the Highlands and Islands, or acquiesced in its evisceration, while maintaining a pseudo-patriotism in their coteries in grotesque contrast with the actual conditions obtaining in the districts they claim to represent. There is no genuine cultural interest among these people and the bulk of what they cherish as Gaelic literature, art, or song is either old stuff ineffectively related to conditions to-day and vitiated by the false attitude that prevails towards it amongst them, or a pseudo-culture derived from it but amenable to a state of affairs against which any authentic Gaelic culture would necessarily have to strive unceasingly. Even at its best it is only folk-art that is cherished, nowhere rising into high classicism and art-forms. In other words, the general regard, where there is any regard at all, is for old forms merely, devoid of the old substance: little new wine is available and, where any is, it is of so poor a vintage that the old bottles serve it. In Mr Erskine, and a few of the contributors to *Guth na Bliadhna* and other organs he has provided from time to time, alone has any



effort at experimental Gaelic arts and letters been sustained: and in him, if in no one else, has that effort been in some measure related to appropriate elements of European culture elsewhere—to the Spanish of Eugene D'Ors, for example. He has made independent affiliations without regard to English interests; and, on the other hand, he has succeeded in preserving conceptions of Gaelic policy and some little interest in the potentialities of Gaelic culture in Scottish communities abroad—especially in certain areas of Canada and America. But few of those who echo the sentiments of the “Canadian Boat-Song” have more than a vague sentimental regard for the old country, and fewer still any concern over the practical elimination of Gaelic genius from the sphere of practical politics and the substitution for it of alien tendencies.

It is unfortunate that no English translation of Mr Erskine's Gaelic dramas has yet been published. Even in translation something of their quality would transpire (although a great deal would be lost), and that would be sufficient to show that in him Scotland has a representative dramatist of no little distinction. A vein of real genius manifests itself in them, and they are on a higher level—and emerge more indubitably as an authentic expression of hitherto-unexpressed faculties of distinctive Scots psychology—than any Scots drama yet written in English or the Vernacular.

All his creative work in Gaelic, too, is characterised by a quality generally lacking in work in a lapsed or languishing language. “Braid Scots” has entirely lost it for centuries, for example, and that constitutes the greatest difficulty now confronting those who would seek to revive “Braid Scots” as a literary medium for work above a Kailyard level. This is a sort of *hauteur*, an absence of rustic coarseness—what, dealing with the same rare quality in Aodhagán O Rathaille, Séumas O h-Aodha happily calls “literary pride,” *uabhar na litriochta*. A well-known Gael (himself a writer of parts) once remarked to Mr Erskine, “You have restored to us ‘gentleman's Gaelic.’”

Circumstances have compelled Mr Erskine to devote most of his time to work of an ephemeral nature—although its influence will be far from ephemeral and much of it will retain a documental value. But his powers would have been better displayed if, instead of being scattered through a mass of newspapers and other periodicals, his



political and cultural propaganda had shaped itself into book-form. Now that younger men are at last coming forward eager and willing and, to some extent at least, able to take over the "donkey work" of the movement, Mr Erskine may perhaps find leisure to give his manifold opinions on Scottish affairs substantive and definitive form.

Stuart Mill was right when he said that: "If all mankind minus one person were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing them." To the extent to which the Scottish Press tends to ignore, suppress, or misrepresent Erskine's views on Scottish matters does that Press partake of the nature of a dangerous and intolerable conspiracy. "Thought," as Ramiro de Maeztu says, "is not only a social function, but one of the most important. If it is a function, like that of railway service, it ought to be acknowledged and organised"—and not made dependent upon the commercial interests of a few newspaper proprietors and their hirelings. And even if it were true that Scotland had benefited materially from the Union with England it would still be true that for many a long year now, Erskine of Marr has stood—and stood practically alone—for things of far more importance, for, as Walt Whitman said of the commercial and industrial development of America, "I too hail those achievements with pride and joy; then answer that the soul of man will not be satisfied with such only—nay, not with such at all finally satisfied."

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE.

### A. S. NEILL AND OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

At the last Annual Congress of the Educational Institute of Scotland, Mr James Maxton, the Socialist M.P. for the Bridgeton Division of Glasgow, delivered an address on "A National Aim in Education," in which he advocated the substitution of the tweedledum of an educational policy amenable to Socialist desires as opposed to the existing tweedledee of an educational system subservient to the established order of things. He pointed to the fact that various powers, Japan, Germany, Sweden and Denmark had made up their minds to achieve certain objectives—commercial, technical, financial or military—and had shaped their educational machinery and inspiration towards achieving these ends. Turning to Great Britain, he asked if there was any such general purpose running through their national life, and answered in the negative. "The people of Scotland and the teachers of Scotland," he continued, "had a duty to do what was done in Japan, what was done in Sweden, what was alleged to be done at Oxford, Cambridge, Eton, and Harrow—to discover definite national ideals—ideals which would not be contradictory of national traditions, which would not clash with national characteristics, but which would be complementary to these and inspire them with new life and vigour." And he proceeded to suggest that suitable ideals for Scotland in this respect were independence, thrift, courage and so forth. Beyond illustrating the puritanical bias of a large (perhaps the overwhelming) element in the Scottish Socialist and Labour movement,

his remarks really begged the question at issue. They were illustrative of the general state of mind in regard to education in Scotland to-day. Almost everybody would share Mr Maxton's sentiments: but, in actual application, there would be a tremendous diversity in the connotations attached to such words as "independence," "thrift," "courage," "character," etc, while "contradictory of national traditions," and "not clashing with national characteristics"—what do such phrases mean? Mr Maxton professes to believe that the Scottish people, not the British House of Commons, should manage its own education. But are our national characteristics to be those our denationalised race manifests to-day—are our national traditions to be deduced from post-Union manifestations of Scottish life or from what? Despite the fact that Scottish Education remains at the mercy of a preponderantly English legislature—hardly an example of our business capacity and those capacities for fighting against the tide and mastering not only our souls but our environments, which Mr Maxton believes to characterise us—he disagreed with the Master of Baliol's view that we are a dreamy, impractical race. His conclusion, moreover, that the ideal system should advance "that sense of values which meant that everyone should get the best possible value out of life" may mean anything or nothing. Well might Dr MacGillivray who followed him remark that he differed from Mr Maxton in regard to the aim not mattering and contend that "the aim is the whole thing—if we go in for a national system of education, let us see that it is a *natural* system of education, one that will develop the real nature and the real good of the individual." But here again what is a natural system of education, what is anybody's real nature and real good?

The type of idea on educational matters held by Mr Maxton and shared to greater or less degree by the bulk of the Socialist and Labour movement, and, perhaps, by Progressives generally, in Scotland to-day, expressed in the best possible way (which Mr Maxton's address by no means exemplified) certainly supplies a much-needed corrective to the hitherto prevalent attitude which it is rapidly supplanting; but it is only relatively better in certain details. It does not throw us back upon first principles nor do away with the anomaly of speaking of

## A. S. NEILL AND OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

"education" when we are referring to a system which imposes far more than it educes and is designed for—or, rather, owes its design to—a multitude of extra-educational factors, lets and hindrances, in which whatever pure educational impulse there may be is almost wholly nullified. What Mr Maxton was trying to say has perhaps nowhere been better expressed than by another Scotsman, Mr G. W. Thomson, in his book, "The Grammar of Power" (The Labour Publishing Company, Ltd., 1924), where, *inter alia*, he says: "It is obvious that the control over education possessed by a relatively small section of the community enables it to dictate not only the conditions of labour, but the very ideology of the common people, whilst giving a thin and false veneer of culture to the classes and an essentially wrong view of history and social dynamics. . . . One important step in human emancipation would be a large grant of self-government to the teachers, who possess at present virtually no control over the form of education or over the conditions which they know are absolutely essential to the efficient discharge of their duties. When the teachers are free themselves, they will quickly educate scholars for liberty." I agree with Mr Thomson that this would be a vast improvement on the present state of affairs; but it does not touch the heart of the matter. After all, there is no guarantee that any consensus of opinion is better than any individual opinion—democratic control is not necessarily better than class-control or a dictatorship. "By their fruits ye shall know them." But from one pole to the other of what I may call the orthodox position—from the point of view which, say, regards the Scottish educational system as it exists to-day as perfect, through positions such as Mr Maxton's, to the point of view which regards it as a branch of capitalist machinery—one thing is taken for granted, and that is that it is right to make children means to ends, whether the end be that they shall become efficient wage-slaves or class-conscious proletarians. That, it seems to me, is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It may be unavoidable in the circumstances in which humanity is presently placed, or is ever likely to be placed, and it may be laudable then since such a system is inevitable to make it as good a system of the kind as possible—to defend it that is, in practice: but there should always be the reservation that it is indefensible in theory. So with all such talk

as that of inculcating patriotism, independence, "truth," thrift and of "making good citizens." All these are irrelevant to the real business of education—which is simply and solely to "educate," to enable the individual to realise himself or herself to the fullest possible degree, without giving him or her any vocational, political, moralistic or other bent or bias of any kind. It may be impossible to embody that ideal in any system of education in the world as it is organised to-day or as it is ever likely to become organised, but there is nothing in principle to choose between an ideology dictated by a relatively small section of the community, by the community as a whole, or by any individual, and, short of the realisation of the ideal of complete self-realisation as the sole objective in education, it is futile and misleading to talk of "educating for liberty." The idea of "indelibly printing" anything on the character of any child—as Mr Maxton ironically enough wanted "the spirit of independence" to be printed—is a monstrous one. Bernard Shaw is right when he defines Education as a form of assault, depending for its only sanction on the fact that might is right. Nor can "good intentions" be successfully pleaded in extenuation.

While it is practically impossible then to hear any idea on educational matters which is not vitiated by incredible presumption, objection may also be taken to Mr Maxton's prelections from a nationalist point of view. It is the sorriest Chauvinism to imply that there is anything distinctively Scottish about independence, thrift or courage. These qualities are to be found in—and are honoured and extolled by—every people under the sun. The national spirit is something apart from any such qualities—it can manifest itself now in them or now equally well in their opposites. Nothing that Mr Maxton said shed any light on the peculiar qualities of the Scottish national spirit—although his speech as a whole perhaps showed some of the main reasons why the Scottish national spirit has so largely lapsed into ineffectuality.

Principal Maurice Jones of Lampeter College was on sounder lines when he recently declared that "the higher standard of knowledge and culture which now prevails amongst the Welsh people was illustrated in the literary and dramatic movements which now characterise the Principality. He strongly criticised the utilitarian conception

of education which was so common and which regarded education mainly as an avenue to a 'job' and did not value it as a treasure in itself, and as something destined to create citizens adequately prepared for life in its wider sense. The result of this conception had been that, in spite of the almost unequalled education in Wales, she had not yet produced a cultured democracy. He traced the mischief caused by a system of education which since 1870 had ignored the existence of a separate nation in Wales with its own language, genius, history and traditions, and which, in spite of many recent improvements, was still far from what it ought to be as a Welsh national system of education." I do not quite share Principal Jones' evident high opinion of the recent literary and dramatic tendencies in Wales—but what he says certainly applies to Scotland with far more force. Only recently have tendencies manifested themselves to improve our educational system in this particular nationalistic sense—and we have been subjected to denationalising influences far longer, far more insidiously and intensively, and far more "successfully," than Wales. Recent writers to the *Scottish Educational Journal*, for example—to show how little we have even yet progressed—have been emphasising the desirability of good plain straightforward English, which is, in fact, the language which is principally taught in our Scottish schools. The connection between that fact and the comparative poverty and inefficacy of Scottish letters must be very close. I believe that the use of English cramps the Scottish style and falsifies and inhibits the Scottish consciousness to an extraordinary degree, and that first-class work by Scotsmen in English is a practical impossibility. This hypothesis at all events fits the facts of our cultural history and supplies a reason for what is otherwise inexplicable unless you are prepared to admit that Scottish psychology is destitute of creative potentialities equivalent to those of other countries—an admission that would have to be qualified by one or two striking exceptions and recognition of the fact that it was not always thus. The fact that there is no effective differentiation between the Scottish and English use of English on the face of it implies an unconscionable suppression of the distinctive elements of Scottish psychology. There is room for a great deal of national activity such as that recently begun to introduce the study of the Scots verna-



cular into our schools and to increase the place given to Scottish rather than English history (even the Secretary for Scotland the other day deplored that while he derived so much benefit from history at school he was given so little "pure Scottish history")—and for a good deal of political activity to secure Scottish control of Scottish education, and the liberation of our system from financial dependence upon English wishes—but, as Mr Thomson elsewhere remarks, the great bulk of politics is concerned with exceedingly unpolitical and generally artificial considerations and rarely gets down to fundamentals, and the same would remain true of Scottish education so re-oriented, relatively better in all but purely educational respects although such a re-orientation would make it. Bergson's theory of the two selves gives us perhaps the easiest method of describing what differentiates any educational system from a real education (*i.e.*, the thing that happens to an artist when he "finds himself.") "Fundamentally the mind is a flux of interpenetrating elements which cannot be analysed out. But on the surface this living self gets covered over with a crust of clean cut psychic selves which are separated one from the other and which can be analysed and described. This crystallisation into separate states has come about mainly for the purposes of action and communication in life" (T. E. Hulme). The present educational system in Scotland—like every other educational *system*—is concerned with the superficial self. Real education—upon which everything that is vital in life depends—is concerned solely with the fundamental self; it is in direct opposition to everything that tends to create the superficial self, beyond the working minimum of sanity, and especially, to anything that tends to so harden that crust as to inhibit or handicap the fundamental self, or give a direction to life from without rather than purely from within. The only Scottish educationist to-day of the slightest significance from the point of view of real education is A. S. Neill, the author of "A Dominie's Log" and the other "Dominie" books, the latest of which is "A Dominie's Five," an account of some of his further experiences in his international school at Hellerau. Mr Neill is now in England and is running his school at Lyme Regis. His importance arises from the fact that he alone, or practically alone, amongst educationists in this country, has



had the courage to follow the newer ideas which are everywhere leavening the educational world to their logical conclusions. Most other educationists go so far and no further; they are pulled up by moral or religious or other extra-educational considerations. But so far as Mr Neill is concerned education is simply and solely a matter of psychology. He does not acquiesce in the interposition of any political, moralistic, religious or other extraneous influences at all—least of all does he come to his task *parti-pris* in favour of any such meaningless abstraction as “independence,” “thrift” or “courage” or as an instrument for the perpetuation of existing conventions of any kind or the facilitation either of the assumptions whence the existing order of industrial civilisation derives its workability or any alternative assumptions which might in any way replace that order with another. He is not concerned with any of these things. In other words he is nothing but an educator—one who draws out, not one who takes it upon himself to “imprint” anything. This may seem far enough from Scottish nationalism: but in so far as there is any nationalistic quality as apart from things which short-sighted people like Mr Maxton mistake for it *that* cannot be inculcated—it can only be allowed to show itself, or prevented in this measure or that from showing itself. The present system largely inhibits or distorts it. Mr Neill’s methods alone can give it the freest possible scope.

Mr Neill has a genius for understatement: and his “Dominie” books have by no means “pulled the weight” which their brilliant common-sense, shrewd knowledge of life, complete integrity of attitude and simplicity of form deserve. People judge largely by appearances. Serious work in psychology and pedagogics is still almost indissolubly associated with either a pompous platitudinous style, or a dreary waste of solemn “scientific English.” Neill ruled himself practically out of court altogether by his blasphemous preference for a semi-fictional form and a snappy medium, liberally larded with slang and enlivened with irreverences of all kinds. His books are, nevertheless, the most stimulating and suggestive on their subject by any Scotsman and disclose a singularly modest but yet extraordinarily candid and courageous personality; and, in the opinion of the present writer, express a point of view in regard to the functions, rights, and most advan-

tageous methods of the educationist which will be the only creditable, or, indeed credible type of opinion at the end of another quarter of a century, while, in contrast to them, the sentiments almost unanimously expressed to-day by teachers or educational administrators, and exemplified throughout our whole system of popular education, will seem like a nightmare of the distant past. The ordinary headmaster of a school to-day may pride himself on being so much better than Mr Wackford Squeers. In the light of what is already known (and so unanswerably demonstrated in Mr Neill's books) the distance advanced seems to me incredibly small, and I am confident that from looking back from the middle of this century it will be imperceptible and they will seem to stand shoulder to shoulder, equally barbarous. But the way Mr Neill expresses this in his new book, "The Problem Child" (where, for the first time, he abandons story-form and simply sets forth his principles and methods, with an invaluable mass of first-hand experience) is "Psychology since Freud's genius made it alive has gone far, but it is still a new science. It is merely mapping out the coast of an unknown continent. Fifty years hence psychologists will very likely smile at our ignorance to-day."

The quality of this fine forthright book, which has established Mr Neill's title to be regarded as an experimental educationist of the first rank, to whose pioneer work the world will subsequently owe a great deal, can be gauged from such sentences as these :—

"An atheist can ruin his family by imposing a code of morality just as effectively as a Baptist can."

"No teacher has the right to cure a child of making noises on a drum. The only curing that should be practised is the curing of unhappiness."

"The over-wrought parent of the 'bad boy' does not as a rule challenge his or her own code of morals. . . . I cannot say the truth is, but I can declare my strong conviction, that *the boy is never in the wrong*. There is no original sin, there is only sickness."

"There may be a case for the moral instruction of adults, although I doubt it. There is no case whatever for the moral instruction of children. It is psychologically wrong. To ask a little child to be unselfish is wrong."

"Not long ago I visited a modern school. Over a hundred boys and girls assembled in the morning to hear

a parson address them. He spoke earnestly to them advising them to be ready to hear Christ's call. The head asked me later what I thought of the address. I replied that I thought it criminal. Here were scores of children with consciences about sex and other things. The sermon simply increased each child's sense of guilt. Christ's call was in each case suppressed effectively when mother first began to teach the child to be good. Christ's call was surely the call to love your neighbour as yourself, and by suppressing God's given instincts the mother taught the children to hate themselves. To love others while hating yourself is impossible. We can only love others if we love ourselves."

These are mild in comparison with much that is in this book. I share every opinion it expresses. I am conscious, however, that the bulk of Mr Neill's book would seem blasphemous heresy to the overwhelming majority of my fellow-countrymen and fellow-countrywomen, and that the majority of the Scottish teaching profession would share their view. It is futile for Mr Maxton to plead for "courage in thought, in facing truths, however unpleasant." The Scottish teaching profession will not face this book. But a few teachers here and there will, and gradually it will triumph, until all the great mass of the teachers who regard it as a hideous travesty of all they believe in will dwindle in historical retrospect to a mob of incredible figures belonging to a barbarous age.

In the meantime those who plume themselves on Scottish Education to-day may reflect on the absence of Scottish arts, letters, and cultural activities of all kinds; on the progressive denudation of our countrysides; on the appalling problems presented by our great cities; on our progressive denationalisation and provincialisation—and justify their self-gratulation. Whether is Scotland drifting? Our educational system does not seem to be communicating any "direction" to our course. Is our inchoate state not due to the prostitution of our schools to materialism and morality, and to a stupid misconception and mal-treatment of the Scottish spirit?

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO.

### R. E. MUIRHEAD AND SCOTTISH HOME RULE.

This is not the place in which to attempt even a summary of the Scottish Home Rule movement or any analyses of the personalities in whom it has mainly been embodied. That such a movement in any country should not have become a factor in affairs which—though it might remain very much a minority element—could not be ignored would be a surprising fact, implying material for a curious psycho-political study; but that this should have happened in Scotland, with its antecedent traditions and tendencies—especially in view of the fashion in which the Union of the Parliaments was contrived—is scarcely credible at all, and certainly quite incredible if the common generalisations as to Scottish character (love of country, capacity for affairs, tenacity, high education, and so forth) are accepted, as they are even by the majority of Scotsmen themselves. Conjoin to this the fact that a majority of the Scottish representation of all parties at Westminster has supported Bill after Bill to restore Self-Government to Scotland, only to accept defeat at the hands of the overwhelming English majority. It implies either that in this particular matter the majority of the Scottish representation were conscious that they had not a proportionate following of the Scottish people behind them or sufficiently behind them to warrant other steps to end what can only have been, if they were really convinced of the need for devolution, an intolerable state of affairs—or an extraordinary incapacity on their own part for leadership. Indeed, it implies both of these—because even if a

majority of the people were not sufficiently behind them, only a radical defectiveness in their own qualities as leaders would have prevented their speedily acquiring an adequate following, if their cause was good. The latter can be assumed from the fact that a majority of all parties of our M.P.'s registered their conviction to that effect from time to time and, however incapable they may have been, it must be conceded that on the whole they were in the best position to know. Nor is it reasonable to assume that in acting as they did they did not represent at least a very substantial body of public opinion. A reverse at Westminster should at least have been marked by a definite intensification of Scottish Home Rule propaganda in the speeches and writings of the members in question. That would have evidenced their good-faith and the determination which they owed to themselves in the circumstances. On the contrary they have always accepted defeat in a manner incredible in men really in earnest. We fall back, then, upon the real explanation of the lack of anything cumulative in the advocacy of Scottish Home Rule in and through the existing political parties. An inveterate habit of thinking of Scotland in terms of the existing situation has stultified for all practical purposes whatever there was of genuine conviction of the need for Scottish Home Rule in the minds of these gentlemen. The same thing accounts for the static state of electoral opinion on the matter. To this in the case of the M.P.'s must be added to some extent, their natural tendency to concentrate on "practical politics," as they are called, instead of real politics—really fundamental issues—and, in the case of the electorate, the sense of impotence created by the lack of leadership and the lack of much of that special knowledge of the neglect of Scottish interests of which, owing to their almost entire preoccupation with the actual issues arising at Westminster, the M.P.'s have failed to make proper use. In other words, both the M.P.'s who have voted in favour of Home Rule and the majority of those of their electors who, if asked, would have expressed themselves in favour of their action in so doing are too much the products of the existing system to develop, in the absence of a campaign coming from an entirely different point of view, any attitude towards the question capable of yielding a real dynamic.

This "unreal" demand for Scottish Home Rule is

mainly maintained by the Scottish Home Rule Association, the mainspring of which is—and has for many years been—Mr R. E. Muirhead. The great majority of the members of the S.H.R.A. envisage in demanding Scottish Home Rule no radical divergence from the existing English situation. The constitution of the Association calls for Scottish self-determination but, apart from the fact that the existing situation is Scottish self-determination in the sense that it can be terminated as soon as an effective proportion of the inhabitants of Scotland make up their mind to terminate it (not that the people of Scotland are to blame for not so making up their minds, in view of the English and Anglo-Scottish monopoly of all the main means of propaganda and publicity), the majority of the members do not contemplate any self-determination which would mean a break-away from existing standards. They are not animated by a deep-seated sense of national difference. What they want is the devolution of the administration of purely Scottish affairs: and their arguments in favour of this are mainly based on relatively trivial considerations. The congestion of business at Westminster, for example, is not the kind of issue to set “the heather on fire.” The great majority of such political issues as would be affected by devolution of this kind find the bulk of the people apathetic. It is certainly absurd that the Scottish question of Church Union should be “enabled” by a predominantly English Assembly, rather than in accordance only with the expressed majority wish of Scotland—but the majority of the Scottish people are utterly indifferent to the question of Church Union, and protest on such a score is consequently a waste of time. It illustrates the misconception of reality which vitiates the whole propaganda of the S.H.R.A. In the absence of an effective grievance they are making mountains of molehills. But the real grievance is not so much in anything that England has done as in what our association with such a disproportionate partner has enabled her to prevent our doing. Mere action and reaction within the range of existing British politics holds us to a plane upon which it is impossible to generate an effective political principle to secure anything really worth working for in relation to Scottish nationalism. What is wanted—what alone will yield a real dynamic—is a separate conception of “Scotland—a Nation” in accordance with purely Scottish psychology.



This, if acquired, will still accommodate Tory, Liberal, and Socialist. That is to say, it could still be urged on a non-party basis. Whence is it to come? It can only arise out of a renewed sense of nationality fed on a re-reading of Scottish history and a delineation of new opportunity. Bickerings as to the neglect of Scottish interests, the disproportionate incidence of imperial taxation, the commercial and industrial disadvantages of bank amalgamation, the cost of sending deputations to London instead of to Edinburgh or Glasgow, and so forth will never develop it. They are mere reflexes of the *status quo*. If a live issue is to be created it must be in another sphere altogether. Mentally, morally, economically and even psychologically the great bulk of the Scottish people to-day are unconscious of having any potentiality of different "direction" to the English. The impotence of the S.H.R.A. is due to the fact that it has concerned itself almost wholly with issues below "nation-size"—issues that have no bearing on the core of nationality, but are the merest superficial trimmings. But it has embodied no vital manifestation of Scottish culture opposed to the prevailing ethos. It has been bogged in mere "politics." In any national movement politics are a very subsidiary matter—effects not causes. Develop a national consciousness and if the existing political institutions are at variance with it they will be altered. The S.H.R.A. have put the cart before the horse. The only way in which the objects of the S.H.R.A. can be realised is by concentrating mainly on undoing all the effects of national subordination and increasing Anglicisation; and that, first of all, in the sphere where it is most vital—not the national purse but the national soul. Merely material considerations, even if they are urged in terms which pay lip-service to larger national ideals, will be ineffective. Sentimentality is useless—and lip-service to Scottish nationality and the great figures of our past is futile if Scottish nationality to-day cannot create distinctive tendencies of an adequate character, and embody them in personalities of sufficient force.

There is nothing so creative about any of the members of the S.H.R.A. In other words, they are not sufficiently Scottish themselves to advance their cause. At the most they are only sufficiently Scottish to maintain themselves—not to make any headway—against the continual pressure



of an alien environment. Their propaganda has never become more than a very minor element in British politics. Neither in spirit, in method, or in tendency, has there been anything specifically Scottish about it. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all these things will be added unto ye." This text embodies a great realisation of what must be the core of any achievement. All the grievances with which the S.H.R.A. occupy themselves will disappear precisely in proportion as the Scottish national soul is recovered and Scotland begins to "stand for" anything again in the comity of nations.

Incompetent diagnosticians of public opinion, the S.H.R.A. propagandists lack alike that proleptic sense of how things will strike people in the mass sometimes found in first-rate journalists, and the further gift, essential to their avowed purpose, of originating the mode or policy, planning the ways and means of its execution, and judging its political reactions in advance and to a T. The absence of the first of these is undoubtedly reflected in the poor quality of their propagandist writing. Surely no national cause was ever advocated in poorer "literature." Is it not something in their attitude to life itself, and to culture, that is at fault—democratic methods, a bourgeois spirit incapable of effectively embodying a claim to sovereign independence, of advancing their point of view on the level of the affairs involved? Lobbying in Westminster and in Co-operative Society Committee-Rooms is a poor imitation of the manipulation of affairs. The lack of an "uncontented care to write better than they can," the disabling absence, even hatred, of extremism, indicates a subordination of temper incompatible with their political aims and claims. It is not an easy thing to develop these faculties, but nothing less will suffice. The whole question of Scotland's position will become one of moment only in proportion to the commanding power that can be acquired in the statement of it—and probably the only way in which such a change can be encompassed is by deliberately generating attitudes and reactions in regard to Scottish affairs, and a style of communicating them, at variance with the whole atmosphere alike of the great mass of Scots apathetic to the issue, and that other body which, while desiring Scottish Home Rule, manifests such an invertebrate readiness to accept defeat, to serve merely

as a safety valve for the *status quo*, or, at best, to continue indefinitely in the rôle of Sisyphus.

While, therefore, I believe that the methods of the S.H.R.A. have been essentially futile, and the personnel almost wholly ineffective for the objects of the Association owing to their lack of essential "vision," it is, after all, by indirections that directions are discovered and in this sense the S.H.R.A. have perhaps done valuable service. They have explored all the ways in which Scottish Self-Government cannot be secured—except perhaps one; the granting of a certain measure of devolution, which might not only mean nothing for the recovery of Scottish nationality in any real sense of the term, but might actually tend in the opposite direction. There are signs, however, that in the S.H.R.A., as in other more important, if perhaps less well-known, groups, the danger of this is now being realised or, perhaps, they are being affected by the development of the necessary dynamic elsewhere. It has taken a long time to realise that the British Parliament cannot grant or withhold Scottish Self-Determination—that that lies wholly with the Scottish people; but apparently the fact has at last struck home.

The main redeeming feature of the S.H.R.A. has been Mr Muirhead—and that largely by his capacity for personal self-sacrifice and his extraordinary tenacity. Even the S.H.R.A. with its anaemic and largely Anglicised ideas contains many members prepared to sacrifice time and energy. It contains fewer who have got away sufficiently from the stock-conception of the Scot to sacrifice money. Mr Muirhead is the principal of the latter. It has so far been a remarkably poor investment. Within the sphere to which he has unfortunately almost wholly confined himself he has maintained a persistent pro-Scottish propaganda with a resource in debate and a factual efficiency and equipment over a long period of years of a most notable kind. If only as one insisting upon a distinction even in the absence of any real difference, Mr Muirhead has thus perhaps, however exiguously, contrived to keep a semblance of Scottish nationalism at work in the minds of large sections of his countrymen too Anglicised to be in any degree amenable to the more truly Scottish propaganda of the Hon. R. Erskine of Marr : and has thus kept them to a greater degree than they

would otherwise have been available for the influence of new fundamental manifestations of Scottish nationalism if, and when, these develop. To those who know "Ronnie" Muirhead and his singularly selfless devotion to the cause he has at heart, his unwearied energy, and his extraordinary patience in the face of continual disappointment (a patience as of Bruce's spider), this may seem a grudging tribute. It is not meant to be so. I am only trying to see him as he will be seen in the perspective of history. "By their fruits ye shall know them"; but to judge Mr Muirhead—and one or two others of his leading associates—Miss A. Milne, Helensburgh; Rev. Walter Murray; and "R. E.'s" brother, Dr R. F. Muirhead, in particular—by the absence of real effect on affairs of the Association, and still more so by the unfortunately sentimental and myopic type of opinion that predominantly characterises it—would be extremely unfair. Nor can I feel that it may be said of them: "They built better than they knew." They have practically mistaken the shadow of Scottish nationalism for the substance—but, at least, believing it to be the substance, it can be said that they have pursued the shadow with a wonderful assiduity and disinterestedness for which they deserve all credit. However misled, they are people of high character, if none of them have capacities of leadership or any dynamic attribute of personality. The majority of the other active workers for the Association are negligible. They address a great many meetings and write a certain number of articles and letters—but they have nothing to say. In this they do not differ from the great majority of politicians of other parties, but the leaders of the latter do move on a plane of prolepsis and *savoir faire*.

If I assume the rôle of "diminisher" to discontent them with their busy ineffectiveness and reveal them as the nugatory factors they are, it is with the hope that they may reorient their activities, transcend their infirmity of will, acquire a technique of development in place of their introvert defeatism, and emerge at length on a plane of effective nationalism. They must oppose the prevailing forces in politics with counter-conceptions of equal magnitude, seeking not the devolution of Scottish affairs from Westminster, but the restoration of Scotland to an adequate place in the sun.

*The S.H.R.A. publish the only existing organ of Scot-*

## R. E. MUIRHEAD AND SCOTTISH HOME RULE.

*tish Nationalism*—a monthly newsheet entitled "*Scottish Home Rule*" (30 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow). Other publications are—"Home Rule for Scotland; the Case in 90 Points," by Rev. Walter Murray, B.D.; "Self-Government for Scotland," by R. B. Cunninghame Graham; "Self-Government for Scotland," by Mrs Annie Besant and others; "Scotland Yet," by Rev. James Barr, M.P.; "The Deer Forests, and How They are Bleeding Scotland White," by J. M. MacDiarmid.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE.

NEIL M. GUNN.

Practically the only young Scottish prose-writer of promise manifesting himself to-day is Mr Neil M. Gunn, whose first novel, "The Grey Coast," is published by Messrs Jonathan Cape, Ltd.—the only Scottish prose-writer of promise, that is to say, in relation to that which is distinctively Scottish rather than tributary to the "vast engulfing sea" of English literature. As a writer of short sketches and short stories, he has contributed largely to the *Glasgow Herald*, to the *Scottish Nation* and *North-eastern Review*, to *Chambers' Journal*, to *The Dublin Magazine*, to, above all, the *Cornhill*, and many other periodicals: and is our nearest equivalent to the Irish Liam O'Flaherty. All that mass of contributions (none of them yet collected in volume form) have had beyond their competence and consequent saleability tentatives of a curious kind—hints of a casual attitude to his output only occasionally interrupted by the need to resolve difficulties of kinds which lie outwith the *gebiet* of magazine-writers. No doubt these passages have often stirred doubts in the minds of editors as to the acceptability of his MSS.—doubts hardly, in some cases, subdued by the perfect normality of the rest. I do not mean "purple passages." I mean sudden breakings-through into dimensions in which the editors and readers of popular periodicals of even the best kinds suffer from incontinent agoraphobia—declassified thus unexpectedly from the given conventions. It is curious to see pedestrian journalese become mucronulate in this fashion, and it was precisely these uncovenanted

developments that aroused speculations as to his further development. Would he thrust out into the atmosphere of originality altogether—throw spikes, not like the “fretful porcupine,” of mere uneasy conscience, but “beyond himself” entirely—random arrows into the unexplored with which all imaginative writing of more than social consequence is solely concerned? He must have had the desirability of excising these passages suggested to him often—he must have had difficulty in placing his MSS. precisely in proportion to the frequency of their occurrence. This, to those who were thinking of his work with non-commercial hopes, argued a commendable thrawnness in him—a sense of something really to say disputing with his mere facility. And it is precisely this “stalk of carle hemp” that has been obtruding itself more and more significantly in his recent work. There is an allied reason for his special significance from a purely Scottish point of view—a double-barrelled reason. His un-Scottish pre-occupation with pure technique; and his constant endeavour to apply it to the purely Scottish scene. In other words, he is showing an ever-lessening tendency to subscribe either in style or in subject-matter to the un-Scottish conventions of all British editors and almost all British publishers. He is, in fact, tending in the opposite direction: and having got rid of the attitude at once to life and to letters which has characterised the period of Scotland’s nationalistic and literary nadir, his artistic integrity is bringing him into unmediated relations with Scottish nature, human and otherwise. The process is not yet complete. He has not wholly found himself nor has Scotland reacquired entire autonomy in his consciousness. His work remains unequal—now almost anonymous in its resemblance to “current fiction” in the mass, now falling into a Kailyaird rut, now tinged with the Celtic twilight. Above these levels, at its second-best, it manifests a point of view not dissimilar to George Douglas Brown’s, but more humane, more *divers et ondoyant* than his, but, at the same time, less organic. It is this style—of attitude to life, not of writing—which comprises most of “The Grey Coast.” But the best things in the book are pure Gunn—something new, and big, in Scottish literature; and they intermittently steep the book in a further dimension of the spirit than the author of “The House with the Green Shutters” ever reached. In the light of them mere real-

ism—inverted Kailyairdism—becomes dated and loses the force it might still retain if these other elements were absent. In other words, another novel of exactly the “House with the Green Shutters” kind may yet be written. The writer of it will be a bigger figure than any other that Scotland has produced since George Douglas Brown died. But Gunn, if he can maintain himself exclusively, for the length of time it takes to write a novel or a sequence of short stories, in the rarer air to which he rises for brief moments every now and again in “The Grey Coast” and elsewhere—will not be a second George Douglas Brown or a second anybody—he will be an originaive artist in his own right; he will have circumvented the alien atmosphere that transmogrifies almost all fictional treatment of Scottish life either into a provincial parody of what it should be or a miserable shadow of English genres, and broken clear through into the Magna Scotia in whose ample and distinctive air Scottish novels can comport themselves in as comely and comprehensive a fashion and with as unqualified an independence of provenance and inimitability of kind, as can the very different novels endemic to the diverse traditions of Russia, France, or England. At his best Gunn gives no mere reflexes or inversions of the forces that have provincialised Scottish literature. Nor in his complex psychological understanding is he imitating later novels from other European literatures than have hitherto been naturalised in our rheumatic atmosphere. His technique and his subject-matter are elements of each other not to be analysed out into imitations, conscious or unconscious, of anything else: but break in an unpredicated fashion from the denied core of our national genius with a promise of effective uprising against the alien culture which has inhibited it so long.

Gunn writes mainly in English, although there is a dialectical colouring in “The Grey Coast” and a psychological patterning of the style which he may yet develop into a purely Scottish use of English. His subtle evocative and “troubling” power is well illustrated in such a passage as this: “There is a quality in this half-light that is at once a folding of wings and an awareness. Colour intensifies, ‘runs,’ so that the ditchside of tall kingcups at hand becomes a deep still flame of gold, and the field of ‘half-sphered scabious’ beyond the bank swoons in a veritable ravishment of ‘purple mist.’ Into the silence



creeps gradually a listening stillness. The bleating of a sheep or far barking of a dog dies out in ears that continue to bear the echoing forlornness. Upon the body itself, squatting stiffly, steals that subconscious alertness which, if a sudden hand were to descend on a shoulder, would cause a jump with the heart in the mouth." And (in the same story—earlier writing than "The Grey Coast") comes this significant evidence of his creative trend: "'Iain Mackay,' I thought, deliberately, epitomised in himself this particular sea-coast. He knew with an intimacy of the marrow its uttermost essence. He merged again with that essence willingly or unwillingly, but in some way *wittingly*. . . . The harbour basin fills. Boat-decks, rigging, masts slanting to rest in their crutches, figures moving about, at first dimly, then more distinctly; a face, faces; sounds: all coming before the staring eyes through stages, as it were, of imperfect focussing till the picture lives, moves, throbs, a species of 'movies,' if you like—far away from the influence one must needs jest about it to keep balance. But under the influence—my father's stride, a trifle quicker than the others; the face a trifle more alert; the tongue with its ever-ready shaft, and there the men from the Lews—the heave-ho! chant of the Gaelic voices, the *krik! krik!* of the halyards. . . . An ache comes to the soul, the lips stir to an old savour, saline, brimful of life. Something here of the marrow, ineradicable. School-keeping, shop-keeping, book-clerking, all the pale anaemic occupations of landmen and citymen . . . teaching children all day long so that they may 'get on,' may be successful in attaining the clerical stool or pulpit, or measuring, at a profit, so many yards of red flannel for a country woman's needs . . . a throw-back, am I?" Or again (writing of Fiona Macleod, Yeats, and the others): "Intellect strives and flashes towards some final revealing illumination—till the effect inevitably expends itself like a twopenny rocket attempting the work of a sun. And when failure thus rushes down in a renewed darkness, swamping all meaning and logic—dream-poetry is there in glimmering half-light, beckoning. Not an interpretation of the Ultimates; a refuge from them. The man of action with his raw grip on the realities, ignores it—till he finds the sphere of his activities dissolved like some unsubstantial pageant, till (for this is the thought)

the routh of life that swarmed the Seaboard and clothed the very salmon-poles is left a ghostly greyness and a crying of gulls. Then poetry casts its net, its iridescent net, and the silvery fish of the intellect is meshed in the music of lost days and beauty foregone. . . . Perhaps the making of all great poetry has involved this fight—and this admission. Perhaps the men who have written greatly of the half-light have known the stark realities of the light. Let me say as much, even if I don't believe it yet, for, after all, what do I know of the Ultimates that I should talk of a refuge from them? . . . There the fading light on the breast of the sea, there the dim-glowing west facing me as arm and body cleave through; and haunting my brain hypnotically the saying: 'And the symbol of Murias is a hollow that is filled with water and fading light.' ”

The nature of the study Mr Gunn undertakes in “The Grey Coast” is indicated in this passage: “The voices settled to a drone again in the margin of Maggie's consciousness. Now and then, as she drew out a needle and prepared for another row, she would glance from under her black lashes at the wag-at-th'-wa'. The glance, returning, would take in the figures by the fireside, and for a moment a subtle appraisal would gleam in it and die. The expression on her face, however, never varied from its indifferent calm: as though the secret life of the mind could go on of its own accord, without touching immediate material existence at the surface at all; indeed, so remote from it that even the gleam of appraisal be-tokened rather a criticism by the unconscious than a disturbance in her positive reflections. Silence, the long brooding hours altogether too long to be filled with thought, the wakefulness wherein no word is spoken, the vague self-hypnosis; it may be that under it all the mind of its own volition pursues hidden ways of dream and thought, to be revealed outwardly in a gleam, an unconscious gesture, a decision positive as unexpected. And of all places, such a grey strip of crofting coast, flanked seaward by great cliffs, cliffs 'flawed' as in a half-sardonic humour of their Creator to permit of the fishing creek, was surely the place for the perfect growth of this duality of the mind, whereby the colourless normal life becomes at once a record of the solidly obvious and of the dream-like unknown.”

This co-existence of incompatible appearances and realities—the antitheses between what the characters choose to be and ought rather to be—the fact that ostensible character is a subtly-manipulated disguise behind which nature seeks to deceive life until, in most cases, it becomes a mere reflex of the disguise—the “monstrous joy of soiling the ideal”—the algoniac alternate yielding to and fighting with brute circumstance—these and such as these are the themes, subtly developed, of this sincere and searching novel, and it is part and parcel of Mr Gunn’s promise that they present themselves with more unanalysable reality and momentum in his dialogues than in his descriptions, intimate and telling as these are. Just how in the simple sentences of these conversations the multiple forces contending behind the words, and, for the most part, just below the level of consciousness communicate themselves with such complicated comprehensiveness of effect and yet such vital conviction is the secret of Mr Gunn’s art. It is enough to say that if he can rid himself of his remaining inequalities—sustain himself wholly at the pitch of the best elements in this book—and bring the method by which he encompassed them to full maturity, he will rapidly take rank as the foremost of living Scottish novelists—a George Douglas Brown come to magnanimity and endowed with all the knowledge psychology has acquired since Brown’s day. As it stands, “The Grey Coast” is a more significant achievement than all the novels of the so-called young Glasgow school put together.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR.

### MRS KENNEDY FRASER AND THE SONGS OF THE HEBRIDES.

Mr Hugh Robertson, writing, very appropriately, in *The People's Journal*, in the course of a series of articles entitled, equally appropriately, "Crotchets and Quavers" devoted a column to "Songs of the Hebrides," in which he expressed his opinions so dogmatically that it must be concluded that they belong to the former of these two categories. "It is not so very long ago since Burns died," he said, ". . . the spark of genius still burns in Scotland. To-day, the newly-published fourth volume of 'The Songs of the Hebrides' came into my hands. In turning over the pages and finding here and there a gem of purest ray serene and everywhere the stamp of the pure gold of achievement, my heart went out to that patient grey-haired woman who lives under the shadow of Edinburgh Castle, and who over many years has laboured so fruitfully in this field of her own choosing. Strolling into a music shop in an English city the other day, I saw scores of Hebridean songs on display. 'Do they sell?' I asked. 'Of course they do,' the manager replied. 'They are not just for Scotsmen; they are for every serious-minded student.' There you are. The name of Scotland carried furth of Scotland, and honoured. And that is only a small part of the service Mrs Kennedy-Fraser has done to her native country. What a strange people we are! In some respects how curiously uncivilised! Were gold or precious stones to be found in the Isles what a terrific rush there would be! The financiers would put on their thinking caps and set companies

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on foot, and bargain and corner. The Press would shriek. There would be questions asked in the Commons. And yet that were a small thing in comparison with what is contained in those four volumes of Hebridean songs. For Mrs Kennedy-Fraser has discovered and reclaimed what is more precious than gold, rarer than rubies, more enduring than institutions or systems of philosophy. . . . What is there within knowledge that is likely to outlive 'The Eriskay Love Lilt' or 'The Seagull of the Land-Under-Waves'? . . . Many of these Hebridean songs fall easily within the category of 'great.' That they are not all exactly as they fell from the lips of the people is not the sound argument many well-meaning Gaels think it is. Nor does it take us further to say that some of the songs, like the 'Twa Sisters' have been pieced together. Both statements may be true, but might be adduced more fitly as testimony to the art of the composer. Again, some folk are fond of reminding us of the invaluable collaboration of Kenneth Macleod. . . . I mention these matters here because I have heard such arguments put forward quite seriously. The fact is Mrs Kennedy-Fraser has done what only a fine artist can do. She has put the songs into what seems to her (and what seems to many competent judges) the most artistic and permanent form. Furthermore she has given to the songs a background of piano-forte accompaniment which in itself is a work of genius. A brilliant technician, a keen student, an original thinker, she never for a moment lets her pen run away with her. A clumsy hand or a clumsy mind could easily have ruined every song in the four books. As it is, there is not a commonplace bar in one of them. Many of them are supreme works of art. . . . I feel proud of this opportunity of paying tribute to the genius of a great Scots-woman, and to the genius also of her colleague. When the generations to come are able to get this work into focus two names will shine out very brightly in our national story. . . . The matter cannot be settled in our lifetime, but it will be settled, and whoever wins, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Kenneth Macleod are not going to be on the losing side."

I have quoted the above *in extenso* for various reasons—because it is a choice example of the mixture of "sob-

stuff," invincible ignorance, and conceit which characterises nine-tenths of the pronouncements of those who are to-day regarded as authorities on the arts in Scotland; because to anyone who is *au fait* with the international musical position to-day it gives itself away so completely and proves up to the hilt the very opposite conclusions to Mr Robertson's as to the precise nature and value of Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's achievements: and because it affords an admirable pretext to do what Mr Robertson and his kind are all so anxious to avoid—argue the matter out. "‘Ah, if Burns were alive to-day how we should honour him!’ You will hear enthusiastic sentimentalists talk in this way. It means nothing. If he were alive we should treat Burns pretty much as our fathers did, for it is not given to a generation to get the work of great genius into right focus. We can stand and understand the effulgence of lesser lights: the fierce white light of genius blinds us. No. Burns alive to-day would just be in a heap o’ trouble and the great multitude would not know him. Eat haggis, therefore, and drink whisky if you will, but do not flatter yourselves. You are not discoverers." How comes it then that Mr Robertson is so certain that he has contemporaneously got "great genius into right focus"? Is he a discoverer? But, if so, what has he discovered? Only what a great mass of the people have already discovered. "Songs of the Hebrides," on his own showing, have a great sale in England and elsewhere. How does he reconcile his unmeasured encomiums of Mrs Kennedy-Fraser with the great popularity of her work in her own day? In view of his own statements he can neither be convicted of modesty or consistency. The fact of the matter is that he knows, or ought to know, that it is all tosh to write of "Songs of the Hebrides" as he does, and that, even in Scotland to-day, intellectually and artistically null as it is in comparison with any other country in Europe, infinitely better work than Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's is being done—and that her work and the associated activities of the Festival movement are standing in the way of that better work—that spirit of genuine integrity, that long overdue development in Scottish music—as inferior work almost invariably stands between genius and the public. The difference in other countries is that there is always an adequate intelligentsia to recognise genius from pseudo-genius and to counter-

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balance the facile demagoguery of their Mr Robertons. In Scotland there is not. "We're a' Jock Tamson's bairns."

What is the truth about these "Songs of the Hebrides"? In the first place they are not Hebridean songs at all. They are in no way essentially Scottish even. And above all—so far from belonging to the future as Mr Robertson would have us believe—they do not even belong to the present; they are definitely "dated"—they belong to the 90's and have the appropriate artificiality and decadence. The readiness with which they have found widespread popularity—their success in "playing to the Gallery"—is, in itself, the strongest evidence against them. Mr Robertson may airily brush aside as of no moment the criticisms that "they are not exactly as they fell from the lips of the people" and "some of them have been pieced together," and dismiss, as airily, any disposition to enquire too closely into the nature of Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's collaboration with Kenneth Macleod. But a great deal more will be heard of these and allied issues, and they are of fundamental importance. Already questions are being asked in quarters to which even Mr Robertson cannot affect a sublime superiority. Mr Ernest Newman, for example, feels "that the application of cold scientific tests to the whole body of Hebridean song would yield some quite positive conclusions." "It would," rejoins another controversialist, "but perhaps not the expected. The first stage in that work, were it to be undertaken, would require to be the establishment by strict scientific principles of a reliable basis on which to found the theories that were to follow. That could not be done with the 'Songs of the Hebrides' as issued to the public by Mrs Kennedy Fraser and her collaborator. Their work is not done on scientific principles, cold or otherwise; and anyone undertaking research or study in Hebridean song and music as revealed in them would be wasting time and effort. The music given to us—at least in some of the more popular items—is adapted to the accompanying English words and the original Gaelic ones are disregarded. The tunes would have to be taken out of their settings, which are not in keeping with the melodies and the original words. The English words would have to be relieved of



all camouflage which tends to delude the unwary. For instance 'Kishmul's Galley' would have to be tamed down to 'MacNeill's Boat.' 'The Reivers' would have to disappear altogether, and some title substituted which would be suggestive of womanly affection for husband or lover which had gone forth on a stormy day 'to rive the sea' (the English idiom being 'to plough the ocean') and not at all to 'reive' argosies on the high seas. The putting of 'The Songs of the Hebrides' in condition for the exercise of scientific study on them would be a huge task in itself, and the last persons to commit the work to are surely those who made the task necessary." Evidence along these lines—and it can be adduced *ad infinitum* and is quite ungainsayable (the examples mentioned will be in themselves sufficient to show most people that we have here again something not dissimilar to the mongrel work of Ossian or "Fiona M'Leod" in the literary sphere)—in no way impugns the artistic quality of the Kennedy-Fraser work; but it proves that to call it Hebridean is misleading and unwarrantable and that if, through it, "the name of Scotland is carried furth of Scotland and honoured," Scotland is accepting bouquets on false pretences.

The important thing, of course, is not whether the songs are Hebridean or miscegnate productions but whether they are, as Mr Robertson avers, in many instances supreme works of art and in most instances great art. But before going on to that, since so much is heard of Scotland's incomparable wealth of Folk-Song, it may be suggested that insular enthusiasts of Mr Robertson's type before they begin talking about discoveries "more precious than gold, rarer than rubies, more enduring than institutions or systems of philosophy" should endeavour to get Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's achievement into proper perspective by comparing it with what has been achieved by other workers in like fields. Let them, with due solemnity, for example, put Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's four-volume collection alongside Mr Bela Bartok's "finds" as the result of twelve years' painstaking labour—Hungary, 2800 folk-tunes; Rumania, 3500; Slovakia, 2600, Biskra. With his colleague, Kodaly, he has collected 4000 more Hungarian melodies. If Mrs Kennedy-Fraser had made her collection on a scientific basis, as Newman wished, it would have enabled us to tell how far they had been

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stylised. Bartok, unlike Mrs Kennedy-Fraser, prints the melodies on one page without harmonies of any kind and then follows his treatment of them. It is in regard to his methods of treating folk-song that he may most profitably be compared with Mrs Kennedy-Fraser. A recent writer on Bartok (Frank Whittaker, in *Musical Times*, March 1, 1926) puts it thus: "He had begun to employ folk-tune themes, but with the penetration of genius realised that he was not building on solid foundations. . . . I am dealing with this phase of Bartok's career in some detail because of its close bearing on the ever-recurring controversy about the influence of folk-songs on 'national' composers. A few months ago, in the *American Mercury*, John C. Cavendish attacked the premise 'that folk-tunes in general lend themselves most aptly to musical treatment, and have thus proved a source of valuable inspiration to the greatest of composers.' In support of this, Mr Ernest Newman wrote 'No one denies the value of good folk-song in itself. All that some of us have denied is that a "national" school of music can be created by composers of the present day taking the folk-music of their own country as their model.' In the narrowest sense this is no doubt true, although I think Bartok, who is certainly helping to create a national school and who frequently employs actual folk-tunes, only just escapes the proscription." But he goes on to show how after winning wide recognition—as long as he was doing work of a folk-music character—after he really began to find himself he was ridiculed, boycotted, maligned, hooted—for years he had to stand alone. The same thing will happen in Scotland whenever a serious effort is made to cut clear of the old "mumbo-jumbo" and create a Scottish national school of music. Whoever tries that on will stand very severely alone so far as Mr Robertson and all his Festival friends are concerned. They are not discoverers—they are determined that there will be no discoveries—and certainly Mrs Kennedy-Fraser is none. She is exactly in the position that Bartok abandoned when he began his fight. She has made no fight. Hers has been a case of capitulation all along the line.

It is interesting to find another writer in the *Musical Times* for March saying of Bantock's Hebridean Symphony

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(which F. G. Scott has well-described as "a welter of sound where the tunes borrowed from Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's collections float about like sprigs of heather"). "It was a disappointment to find how unimpressed one was on rehearing this work after so long a period (ten years)." Let Mr Robertson revise his prediction of immortality for Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's work in the light of that. The truth seems to be that no technique applied to our native productions can raise them to art products of a first-rate order—these can only be attained by a Scotsman who has completely assimilated their content, *lived it*, in fact, and has a technique for that expression and no other. True art is the balance between technique and expression. Wherever there is not that balance the result is artificial and inartistic. The matter can be set out in a table, as follows:—

Technique = Expression.	I. Folk-Song and Dance.
Technique greater than Expression.	II. Utilisation (as by Bartok) of above. Never arrives at balance.
Technique = Expression.	III. Pure creation as in I., creating as the primitives did but using modern means and modern matter.

Mrs Kennedy-Fraser is only at Stage II., and has not sacrificed her popularity, as Bartok did, by passing on to Stage III. to achieve anything worth while either for music or for Scotland. "We have reached a point," as F. G. Scott put it in his recent address to the Glasgow Centre of the English Association, "in European musical history when it is hardly any longer possible to utilise folk-songs as leading themes in music. We must seek rather to get at the spirit which animates our native songs and dances and make *our* music as the primitives made *theirs*, a reflection of our environment and spiritual needs. This is what I understand by the description of music as being a language—a universal language, not merely a universal notation, able to meet all contingencies." Bartok's use of folk-song would shock all Mrs Kennedy-Fraser's admirers. She is carrying on the old tradition. "Peat-Fire Smoothing" is really a smooching of Scottish intelligence. Or, to quote Scott again, "It is not necessary that Scottish music

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should flatter Scotsmen—they have lived on flattery long enough—at present they need a music that will tell them what they are—a very different matter.”

The modern Italian composer, Casella, gives the following divisions in his “Evolution of Music” :—

- I. The Diatonic Period (Primitives, Renascence, Classics, Romantics).
- II. Transition Period (Post-Wagnerians, Neo-Classics, Precursors of Modern Era).
- III. Present Period (Polymodality, Tonal Simultaneity, and Atonality).

Where does Mrs Kennedy-Fraser come in there? Her future is ancient history: she is a Rip Van Winkle of Scottish musical development. E. J. Dent says that “the function of art is to strike a balance between the ‘romantic’ and the ‘classic’ sides of human personality—what common parlance calls the ‘heart’ and the ‘head.’” Any sort of music can do this to suit somebody; it depends on the state of the “heart” and the “head” of the hearer in question; but, if work is going to be put forward as of national significance and permanent artistic value, then we are entitled to demand that the national standard of heart and head involved in the choice is of a comparatively creditable kind, concerned with work capable of appealing to men, as well as to seals, and dependent upon something of more consequence than scarlet robes for its vogue.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE.

### VARIOUS POETS.

I.—DOUGLAS AINSLIE.      II.—RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR.

The late Professor W. P. Ker, in his address to the Philological Society on Jacob Grimm, observed that the Brothers Grimm "had not much taste for romantic excursions and inventions; their temper is just the opposite of that empty romantic craving, like the hunger of lean kine, which sent the poets and novelists ranging over the Universe in search of subjects, properties, and local colour." "Jacob Grimm," he continues, "is of the same mind as Wordsworth; his romance is at home. He puts it finely in the dedication to Savigny: 'True poetry is like a man who is happy anywhere in endless measure, if he is allowed to look at leaves and grass, to see the sun rise and set; false poetry is like a man who travels abroad in strange countries and hopes to be uplifted by the mountains of Switzerland, the sky and sea of Italy; he comes to them and is dissatisfied; he is not as happy as the man who stays at home and sees his apple tree flowering every spring and hears the small birds singing among the branches.'"

His dissatisfaction need not be conscious, however, and it is in a somewhat different sense than the surface one the word implies that his poetry may be less "happy" than it might have been if he had stayed at home. Scottish poetry has suffered a great deal from this cause. Of Douglas Ainslie, in particular, we must lament that, like Ephraim, he has "joined himself to strange gods," and that he has in the process so completely denationalised himself as to have practically ceased to be a Scottish poet

in any sense of the term without becoming either a European or an English one in any effective fashion.

From his five volumes of poetry, all out of print, he has now selected eighty poems for publication as his "Chosen Poems" (Hogarth Press, 1926), and the volume has an interesting introduction by Mr G. K. Chesterton—himself, as are Walter de la Mare, Gordon Bottomley, and other contemporary English poets of note—partly a Scot. No one perhaps has written more pregnantly, with more concentrated understanding, of Scottish landscape and Scottish life, and more particularly of Scottish letters, than Mr Chesterton. No student of Scottish literature should overlook his introduction, for example, to Dr Greville MacDonald's life of George MacDonald (1925). Here again, in his comments on Mr Ainslie's poems, he hits the nail upon the head. Observing how lightly we pass in Mr Ainslie's poems from translations from Italian to translations from Sanskrit, from purely classical and Hellenic pictures to Chinese scenes, he says: "Yet I have happy doubts about all this universality of culture. I suspect Mr Ainslie of being something better than a citizen of the world. I suspect him of a secret nationalism, and of wearing, so to speak, a plaid under his pilgrim's gown. Nobody ever yet got Scotland out of a Scot; and I do not believe that the author, in his heart, allows Scotland to descend to an equality with trifles like Athens and India and China. I had the first hint of this when I turned the page containing that most spirited and spontaneous lyric addressed to a lady descended from the great Cameron of Lochiel. This is not pretending to be a Buddhist or an ancient Greek or an ancient Chinaman. A lyric ought to be like a gesture. This lyric has in it the very gesture of a man giving a toast on impulse at the end of a banquet, lifting his glass with an outward thrust and speaking words that come to him. Even something irregular in the rush of the simple metre resembles exactly the rush of words that would come with such a movement. Sir Walter Scott would have been glad to have drunk the toast—or to have written that poem. And this impression increased in my mind when I came to the longer poems about Scottish history. Their very length is in this sense a sort of betrayal. Rapid as are the events they describe, they have an air of leisure as the verses of Scott had an air of leisure. It is the spirit of leisure that rests on men

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when they are writing about the things they really like. It does not in any sense follow that they are the things they do best, or even that they think they do best. It is a question of liking the subject rather than liking the result. But we know by this atmosphere when a man does like a subject; when he would like the subject even without the result. Sir Walter Scott probably got more pleasure out of the rhymes and legends he collected than out of the poems and novels he made from them; and was more fresh and spontaneous as an antiquary than as a poet. It is this pleasure in the subject itself that I feel in this case in the ballads about the battles of Scotland. And it is this fact that confirms my suspicions that the author is something better than a cosmopolitan."

There is a great deal of truth in all this. But in my opinion it is also true that the few Scots poems in it are also among the very best poems in the collection. Mr Ainslie's work would have reached a higher level if he had been content to be first and foremost the Scot that he so seldom—but then so successfully—permits himself to be. There is no gainsaying the quality of "The Stirrup Cup" to which Mr Chesterton refers:—

Lady, whose ancestor  
Fought for Prince Charlie,  
Met once and nevermore,  
No time for parley!  
Yet drink a glass with me  
"Over the water":  
Memories pass to me,  
Chieftain's granddaughter!  
"Say, will he come again?"  
Nay, lady, never.  
"Say, will he never reign?"  
Yea, lady, ever.  
Yea, for the heart of us  
Follows Prince Charlie;  
There's not a part of us  
Bows not as barley.  
Under the breeze that blew  
Up the Atlantic  
Wafting the one, the true  
Prince, the romantic.



Back to his native land  
Over the water :  
Here's to Prince Charlie and  
Lochiel's granddaughter !

For two or three more such lyrics a great proportion of the "Amiel's Thoughts," "Calypso," "Stecchetti's Lyric," "Sapphics at Versailles," and the like which comprise Mr Ainslie's collection could gladly have been dispensed with. He goes everywhere but really gets nowhere—except when he returns home. The other Scottish poems are "From the Prelude to the Song of the Stewarts," "Battle of Largs," "Coming of William Wallace," "Last Adventure of Wallace," "The Mother of Robert Bruce," "The Coming of Robert Bruce," and "Death of the Douglas." No Scottish anthologist can afford to overlook them—especially perhaps the last, with its splendid ending:—

. . . the bones of the Douglas repose  
In the Church of Saint Bride 'neath the granite.  
Where yet ye shall view, and ye please,  
Eighth marvel of seven on our planet,  
The Douglas at peace.

## II.—RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR.

Mrs Taylor is in like case to Mr Ainslie—only she is a greater poet, and the loss to Scottish poetry in her alienation has been greater. The extent to which she has estranged herself—largely Italianised herself—is curiously illustrated in the following extracts from her "Aspects of the Italian Renaissance," in which we have the curious spectacle of a Scotswoman coming to look at Scotland with the eyes of a foreigner and seeing things remote from reality.

"It may seem strange," she says, "to pass to a little and barren kingdom" (*i.e.*, from Florence, that "city of the red lily, of the vine and the olive, of the tenderest Campanile and most daring Dome"). "Yet it is natural enough, for Flodden Field was only one of the red love-tokens that Scotland wore for France. The French Renaissance crossed the sea most definitely with Mary; and if the bitterness of political strife rent and spoiled the gift it was French building, French personality, that affected Scotland,

as the French Royalty had already dyed her mood; and it was a French reaction that ruined the burthen of beauty, for Scottish Protestantism came from the lucid and terribly definite Calvin, not from the compromising Luther. In this country, where Celt, Norman, Latin and Scandinavian have never really mingled, there were, and are, deadly contrasts. As great spaces of barren moor and sighing fires and grey mysterious waters give a heightened value to certain natural things, like birchwoods rare as illusions of jasper and silver, spring branches with the buds set like patterns, cherryblossom singing like an epithalamium, green lakes like water-lilies set in cups of barren rock, exotic, Egyptian, wild pure sunsets, and the miraculous western seas—so the stretches of brooding, seldom-speaking, ironic and tragic people are broken constantly by the leaping up of personalities compact of pride, passion and imaginative charm, red flowers in a barren and sea-tempered land."

Of "the most famous of Renaissance ladies," she writes—"Marie Stuart, lover of love and verse and personal liberty, wonderfully red and white, flower-like and flame-like, whose name still creates an impression as of clashing steel, whom it seemed necessary either to adore or to kill, the anger of her enemies being only an inversion of the idolatry of her lovers! She came with her French songs and music and dances, her Italian secretary and her Renaissance tolerance, but to a land already half-Catholic, half-Calvinist, preying violently upon itself, like the Celtic snake-symbol. The Calvinist won for a while this barren, beautiful land of legend, ballad, and song, eager for the exotic, hungry for extremes. But the religious difference, fiercer and more sincere than in any other country, and therefore more devastating, yet had a Renaissance origin on either side; and the spirit of the great period still lingers in the land where the Latin Chair of a University is the Chair of Humanity, and where proud poverty is yet in love with antique learning." Would it were true!

Mrs Taylor's poetry suffers even more than her prose from this want of truth, this heady hyperbole, this fantastic over-colouring. It is mostly very precise, very far-fetched, very mannered, very unreal. The reasons are not far to seek for her failure—as for Mr Ainslie's failure—to acquire a place of the slightest consequence in English poetry. The best of her work, like

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### II.—RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR.

the best of his, is the most Scottish: and she counter-balances herself even more effectively in this way than he does—swinging back from floreate affairs of a very Italianate order to—actually—bare little stanzas in Braid Scots. The latter are often sufficiently good to show that an unprofitable prepossession with the Italian Renaissance has robbed the Scottish Renaissance movement of one whose true place should have been at its head. Take “The Princess of Scotland” as an example of Mrs Taylor’s Scottish poetry, not in the vernacular:—

“Who are you that so strangely woke,  
And raised a fine hand?”

*Poverty wears a scarlet cloke  
In my land.*

“Duchies of dreamland, emerald, rose  
Lie at your command.”

*Poverty like a princess goes  
In my land.*

“Wherefore the mask of silken lace  
Tied with a golden band?”

*Poverty walks with wanton grace  
In my land.*

“Why do you softly, richly speak  
Rhythm so sweetly-scanned?”

*Poverty hath the Gaelic and Greek  
In my land.*

“There’s a far-off scent about you seems  
Born in Samarkand.”

*Poverty hath luxurious dreams  
In my land.*

“You have wounds that like passion-flowers  
you hide:

I cannot understand.”

*Poverty hath one name with Pride  
In my land.*

There are several little ballad-fragments, and many interesting attempts to present Scottish subjects in new forms in “The End of Fiammetta,” which no Scottish anthologist should overlook, and which have their signi-

ficance in these days when there is a wide-spread feeling of discontent with the old ruts to which Scottish poetry has been so long confined, and through the whole transpires an attitude to Scottish history, psychology, and nature, human and otherwise, which has a peculiar interest at the present juncture and may be a means—if it has not enabled Mrs Taylor to free herself and become the Scottish poetess she was surely intended to be—of freeing others and may exercise a great and beneficial influence on the immediate future of Scottish poetry as a whole.

*Mr Ainslie is best known as the translator of Benedetto Croce. Messrs MacMillan published his translation of Croce's "Philosophy of the Spirit" (4 vols.), and Messrs Chapman and Hall, "European Literature in the 19th Century." Mr Ainslie's own books of poetry are:—Escarlamonde (G. Bell and Sons); John of Damascus (Messrs Constable); Prelude to the Song of the Stewarts (Messrs Constable); Moments (Messrs Constable); Mirage (Elkin Matthews); and Chosen Poems (Hogarth Press).*

*Mrs Taylor's books are:—Poems (1904); Rose and Vine; The Hours of Fiammetta; The End of Fiammetta; and—prose—"Aspects of the Italian Renaissance" (Messrs Grant Richards, Ltd.).*

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX.

### VARIOUS POETS.     III.—MALE VOICE CHOIR.

Well over 1000 poets who have published at least one volume of verse are living in Scotland to-day, and there must be several times that number alive and contributing to various periodicals who will yet do so. To put the total number of versifiers at round about 5000 is probably well within the mark. I have read, I think, all the volumes of verse that have been published by Scottish rhymers in or furth of Scotland within the last quarter of a century, with the exception of some privately-printed or obscurely printed work. The great bulk of it all is without a single redeeming feature. The task of hunting for the slenderest yield of anything in any respect meritorious is a veritable searching for needles in an endless succession of haystacks. Only a very few of the writers in question have succeeded in evolving a single set of verses, or even a single verse, of the slightest value. The whole of this output falls into two main categories—work that is indistinguishable from the great mass of mediocre verse in English that is being produced everywhere else throughout the English-speaking world, and work that is, however mediocre, distinguished by specifically Scottish subjects and settings, and, in a very considerable proportion of this category, by being, more or less, in what purports to be Braid Scots. I only intend to refer here to poets who while inferior to those with whom I have already dealt singly, and in most cases greatly inferior, yet rise above the ruck and whose work presents some aspect or other of value, however modest. And I take the men first.

Peter Taylor has not yet published any volume, but he has done work well above the average, both in English and in Scots. Both in choice of subject—as in some admirable verses which first appeared in *Punch* descriptive of the passing of a motor-car—and in an absence of stock-reactions, “rubber stamps,” he displays a modern intelligence at work, alert if not penetrating, while in his Braid Scots poems he is one of the very few whose verses might not equally well be the work of any other of an almost countless army of vernacular rhymers. He has not, however, succeeded in liberating himself from the Kailyaird pressure to any vital extent. Rather he hovers still just within its penumbra, but not too far within to be unaffected by the pleasanter prospects beyond to which, albeit, he cannot wholly win. As Robert Bain said in an admirable article on “Scottish Poetry of To-day,” in the “Burns Chronicle” (1926): “In the poetry of both Charles Murray and Violet Jacob there is something from which the coming Scottish poets must liberate themselves. They must cease singing for ever about a day that is dead—not because I say it, but for their own salvation. The home hills, the old days at school, the places hallowed by sentiment, country life seen in retrospect—these have been the themes of innumerable verses that differed in nothing but geography. Now the yearning for home is one of the most vital of human instincts, the love of it at the root of all true patriotism. If these feelings are, however, a mere sentimentality, and not a deep passion, they tend to a slackening of thought. Artistry grows flabby as the emotional impulse fails in power, and when neither passionate art nor a passionate heart is driving the poet, poetry trickles out into thin verse. So the local poet comes into his pale kingdom and rules in thowless state. What oppresses me in reading all this poetry of place is that it seems to be written by old men or exiles; even its humour seems a chuckling over ancient humours, which take on a romantic charm when regarded through the rosy-tinted glasses of memory. But the great emotions, pride and love or contempt and hate, do not sweep through one in a thousand of verses so—inspired, must I say?—and only old cronies are kindled, and even these to but a momentary flicker of fire. Scottish poetry, if it is to come to anything, must cut the painter that binds it to the past and sail out into the deeps of the living world around it. The

apron-strings of even the kindest mother will fetter the growing son, but the poetic cords of the finest past are a hangman's rope. To be worthy of Scotland her poets must create her afresh, seeing her as she is, accepting her past as a driving force or as a stimulus to rivalry in new fields of endeavour, lighting their own torch at the ancient fires, not merely holding up a mirror to reflect these." But I am afraid that, for the most part, Mr Taylor is rather reflecting alien fires. New to Scottish poetry as some of the notes he strikes are, they are not new to English poetry, and he has not succeeded in blending them effectively with his background. His poetic faculty is working pretty much on the old lines of Kailyard conventionalism; what difference there is is superimposed by an intellectualism trying to get out of the old ruts but unseconded in its endeavour by the profounder factors upon which the quality of the poetic result depends. Mr Taylor has written nothing of permanent value: but two or three of his poems would deserve a place in any anthology of contemporary Scottish poetry not circumscribed, say, to less than a hundred examples by perhaps half as many different writers: and his work as a whole, both in its little successes and its larger failures, has a special interest at the moment as evidencing the difficulties and dangers of the transition through which Scottish poetry is passing. The same may be said of the work of Alister Mackenzie—a slim sheaf of which has been published by the Porpoise Press—only the English influences to which he has responded have been different. So also in the case of George Rowntree Harvey, David Cleghorn Thomson, and Thomas Scott Cairncross—the last an older and more accomplished poet than these others, whose English work has approximated much better to the best of its models, and who in it is much more of a Scottish poet, in the essence of his work as in the externals of preoccupation with the Scottish scene and with Scottish themes, while, curiously enough, in his Braid Scots work he is irremediably poor and actually less Scottish. Lauchlan M'Lean Watt is a voluminous versifier in English, but his work is a wholly nondescript welter on the surface of which the Scottish externalities of subject and setting are jostled hither and thither like so much flotsam and jetsam. His prose writings on Scottish literary subjects show that he has no intuitions of value of either a critical or creative



character. There is perhaps little or no fury about his overwhelmingly pietistic and sentimental output, but it is at least mainly sound, "signifying nothing." At his rare best, like Taylor and the others I have mentioned, he might deserve inclusion in an anthology of such a character as I have predicated. All six, while they have a certain technical ability, are incapacitated from acquiring the other elements which, in association with that technical ability, might produce work of a still minor enough character, but equivalent in value to, say, that of the English Georgians, the least of whom (in all the volumes except the last one, at any rate) is a giant in comparison to any of them, by a fundamental indistinction of spirit, a sheer lack of *nous*, of creative purpose. Their work is essentially meaningless. They nevertheless represent the next flight in contemporary Scottish poetry to such poets, in English, as Malloch and Jeffrey, if a long way behind them, or, in Scots, to Charles Murray.

Along with them may be mentioned W. H. Hamilton, Duncan Macrae, Will H. Ogilvie, and Cyril Taylor. Hamilton's work is almost wholly imitative in manner and to a large degree in content too. He is best when he is most personal. But he has at least a sense of form—an ability to seize upon and reproduce modes, generally of the more musical kind—which is lacking to all the first-named five, except Cairncross, and the result is that, slight as is the poetical value of his work, it bears the impress of a spirit that is keenly sensitive to the poetry of others. (as, indeed, his study of "John Masefield" and innumerable critical articles in diverse periodicals, amply attests). Perhaps for this very reason he has had all the more difficulty in "finding himself." Macrae is an older man and writes in older modes with a species of Parnassian effect. Will H. Ogilvie is one of the most prolific of modern versifiers, and perhaps over-facility has been his ruination. Miss Palmer, in her succinct and valuable account of "Modern Australian Literature," points out how the pioneers of Australian poetry in the nineties of last century were "joined by a brilliant colleague, Will Ogilvie, who in his 'Fair Girls and Grey Horses' ended by destroying their simple craft. With more skill than the others, he had less real simplicity, and imparted into the bush themes a light romanticism and a touch of facile sentiment. Where the bush ballad had been like a man

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striding across open country he made it into a waltz in a barn, with lamps and flowers. As far as mere form went, this meant the substitution of smart stanzas lit by epigrams for the long loping lines and sparse rhymes. But in spite of the troubadour easiness of most of his work, there was a hint of real poetry in it." It has, despite his long tale of books, remained at most a mere hint, and, in his case, as in that of the previous two mentioned, there is nothing specifically Scottish, even when Scottish subjects or scenes are taken. It is all a case of the superimposition of alien and second-rate techniques—not any technique growing out of the subject itself or dictated by those elements of these writers in which whatever real poetic faculty or real nationality of spirit they have resides. This also applies to Cyril Taylor, except that his work at its best depends more upon vital observation and genuine reaction. There is no mistaking the gleam of real poetry in the following verse from a poem entitled "Frost"—as clear a gleam as is to be found anywhere in the work of any of these poets, although Taylor cannot manifest it for more than a line or two at a time anywhere and his average quality is lower than that of some of these others—

"No living thing is nigh;  
Only a robin comes  
Begging with bright round eye  
The world's crumbs."

So slight a gleam as that, nevertheless, entitles Taylor to be ranked among the foremost twenty of the great five thousand.

E. R. R. Linklater deserves honourable mention in a sub-section of the above category as a humorous poet—a *rara avis* in Scotland. There are, of course, a perennial crop of light-verse writers in our School and College and University Magazines and elsewhere. Linklater rises sheer out of the ruck of these and has developed an "angle" of his own which he exploits with great technical dexterity. Along with him may be bracketted R. Watson Kerr, who has rendered service in other directions to modern Scots letters as the conductor of the Porpoise Press. Kerr's recent Hudibrastic verse has had certain merits which give it a niche of its own. Whether he will develop real satiric power remains to be seen. The need for work of that kind is so great—and the knack of producing it apparently

so rare—that further developments may be eagerly awaited. Kerr's war poetry—at its best among the best of its kind—certainly the best produced by any Scottish soldier (Sorley's and Joseph Lee's was of quite another kind)—I shall deal with elsewhere: in it a savagely realistic reaction employed the same technical means as are now being engaged to sarcastic purpose. Of the other younger poets represented in "Scottish University Verses, 1918-23," who have written verse of a quality above that of the great bulk of the general output by all Scottish poets during the same years but who, apart from such isolated successes, have no title yet to be considered as "practising poets" may be mentioned Angus Macrae, W. S. Morrison, and Kenneth M'Cracken. These three have manifested a potential ability which Scottish Poetry can hardly afford to let go without further exploration. In like case are William Soutar, Alasdair Alpin M'Gregor, and A. D. Mackie.

Murdoch Maclean, the author of "Songs of a Roving Celt" and other volumes, is a versatile and voluminous versifier of the Will H. Ogilvie type, but with a broader hint of real poetry in his work and a robuster nationality of sentiment, while his Gaelic affiliations differentiate him from those I have already mentioned, contrasting favourably with the Celtic Twilightism of Lauchlan M'Lean Watt and the more conventionalised and, in other respects, much slighter Hebridean work of Alasdair M'Gregor. Maclean is, on the whole, the truest poet yet named; and his work should certainly not escape Scottish anthologists. Despite the strong Gaelic element in much of his work, he handles the Doric equally well in other poems, while he develops romantic or realistic themes with equal facility and a general effect of artistic integrity—that is to say, of varied but always authentic and well-personalised impulses finding appropriate forms. James Roxburgh M'Clymont is another ready writer with a large and varied output, but he falls into quite a different class, being, like a far more diffuse Douglas Ainslie, a cosmopolitan poet to whom everything is grist. Robert Crawford published a series of sonnets on "Eve" in the "Scottish Chapbook" which entitle him to mention here. None of his other work has, however, approached the same plane.

Professor Alexander Gray performed a real service to Scots letters by his translation of the songs and ballads

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of Heine into the Doric. These renderings are, at their best, a splendid series of demonstrations of the potentialities of development in Vernacular verse, and take rank as amongst the best translations of Heine yet effected into any language. In his original Doric verse, Gray seldom, if ever, approaches the level of these translations in his manipulation of Scots, while, in content, they are, for the most part, on a pedestrian Kailyaird level. In his English verse, while the quality of the poetic spirit at work is invariably very thin, that is sometimes offset by an epigrammatic sparkle and is generally manifested in neat and economical forms. Of all these and a few other writers—say a score out of the whole number—it may be said, as Bain said at the close of the article to which I have already alluded, that they “have written single poems or a few indicative of a changed outlook, a bolder presentation of reality, and a genuine eagerness to catch the spiritual significance of life to-day. . . . But they have still, in my opinion, to make good their claim to be regarded as poets of national standing.”

Two of them who are very popular amongst certain (different) classes of readers and are in their way “national figures”—Will H. Ogilvie and Lauchlan Maclean Watt—owe that position entirely to extra-literary causes or to popular confusion as to the nature and functions of poetry.

*Representative selections are given in “Northern Numbers” of Peter Taylor (3rd Series) Lauchlan Maclean Watt (2nd Series); Thomas Scott Cairncross (1st Series) W. H. Hamilton (3rd Series); William Soutar (3rd Series); Will H. Ogilvie (1st and 2nd Series); Alexander Gray (2nd and 3rd Series); R. Watson Kerr (1st and 2nd Series). Gray’s Heine translations, and Cyril Taylor’s “The Secret Flower, and Other Poems” are published by Messrs Grant Richards; D. Cleghorn Thomson’s and Robert Crawford’s poems by Basil Blackwell, Oxford; J. R. McClymont’s by Messrs Ouseley; Hamilton’s book on Masfield by Messrs Allen and Unwin; Dr Maclean Watt’s “Scottish Ballads and Ballad Writing” by Gardner, Paisley, and on “Gavin Douglas” by the Cambridge Press; and Murdoch Maclean’s “Songs of a Roving Celt,” etc., by Messrs Deane’s Yearbook Press.*

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN.

### IV.—LADIES' CHOIR.

To turn from the Male Voice Choir to the Ladies' Choir and do for the small percentage of our poetesses who are in any measure perceptible above the rut what I have just done for their brothers, I must, first of all, single out the name of Jessie Annie Anderson. She is to be praised in very much the same way, despite very similar defects, as Croce praises Fernán Caballero—for her abundant femininity, her many-sided interests, her spontaneity, and, along with these, her carelessness of artistic elaboration. "She attempted no blandishments," says Croce of Caballero, "she paid no attention to arranging in such a way as to excite or to seduce the imagination of readers, she did not expand and falsify feelings and passions, nor raise them to the rank of theories, but was animated with a pure and serious conviction, and possessed sound judgment. And above all a spring of poetry was bubbling in her heart." As much may be said of Miss Anderson; she is an equivalent figure on the much smaller scale of Scotland. Writing of Robb's "Book of Twentieth Century Scots Verse," Thomas Henderson has said: "Of examples of the complete mingling of the universal and the personal that makes the true lyric we have not many. Jessie Annie Anderson almost gives it to us in *At Sweet Mary's Shrine*—

"Luve broke my hert, an' got within—  
He only tried tae pain it;—  
How could Luve brak' sae saft a hert?  
I never socht to hain it."

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That certainly comes within measurable distance of the magical simplicity of

"I sighed and said among them a'  
Ye are na Mary Morison!"

but it is by no means an isolated occurrence, but a very frequently recurring one, in the very considerable bulk of Miss Anderson's work. But she never gets beyond that "almost." Bathos follows hard on the heels of Beauty; scarcely anywhere does she maintain for a whole verse—let alone a complete poem—those pure perceptions which illumine to many phrases in otherwise unhappy contexts, and which, so maintained only a few times, would have given her a much higher place than with all her abundance she has attained. That is why she must be graded so far below Marion Angus, for example—although Miss Angus works only the slenderest vein, and Miss Anderson has ranged over the whole field of poetry and essayed innumerable modes. The present writer devoted a short study to Miss Anderson's work in *The Scottish Chapbook* (January, 1923), in the course of which I said: "Miss Anderson has learned no parlour tricks. Coteries cannot capture her, nor stunts corrupt. She has never exploited herself, nor does her work lend itself to exploitation by others. She has never been tempted to be clever. She is catholic in a fashion which is permanently unfashionable and eminently Christ-like. A glimpse of her working creed is caught in such lines as these:—

. . . . . we did agree art is a gift  
Not to be tricked in light, fantastic ways;  
Nor to create nor catch a common craze;  
Nor to be used in mart in tradesman thrift;  
Nor as a tranquil lake whereon to drift  
By pleasant thoughts through fair and easeful days;  
Nor to be used as power to win sweet praise;  
But as a trust, God-given, to uplift  
The whole creation to the Higher law,  
By truth's unsparing sight, who sees the core,  
By strenuous effort, sympathies which draw  
The lives of men together more and more . . .

She has an abiding anticipation of 'the Unimaginable life of God,' which makes her sonnets like 'a night of stars triumphing toward the Dawn.' It is a great pity that with her big heart and many gifts she lacks that faculty

of achieving significant form, in the absence of which all the rest is so largely wasted. She is also a busy writer on Scottish issues in numerous papers and periodicals and, curiously enough, a sound and discriminating critic of the work of others. I know few more interesting books on subjects connected with Scottish Poetry than "Lewis Morrison Grant: His Life, Letters, and Last Poems," which she edited. It should not be overlooked by any student of modern Scottish life and letters.

I also wrote an article on the sonnets of Miss Hilary Staples in *The Northern Review* of May, 1924, and need say no more here than that, like Miss Anderson, her work should not escape any anthologist of contemporary Scottish sonnets, while of her work as a whole pretty much the same may be said as of Miss Anderson's, save that she has a smaller range and, even within it, less height and depth. More recently she has written to a considerable extent in Braid Scots: and her work reflects the new tendencies which are applying the vernacular to fresh imaginative purpose. A poetess of a very different type is Brenda Murray Draper, who writes for the most part in free forms to an effect that is largely (but excellently) journalistic, although at its best it rises into genuine poetry in which, however, there is nothing distinctively Scottish either in the expression or in the fundamental intellection. Muriel E. Graham is a more diverse and finished versifier; she has a sense of form far superior to any of the three already mentioned. The content of her work is too often *cliche* and commonplace; the impression it gives is of a writer who has a very considerable measure of dexterity in the manipulation of words and verse-forms, but who has little or no poetical gift of her own. Yet here and there she achieves an excellent imitation of a good poem. She reminds me in this respect of the American lyricist, Sara Teasdale. Janetta W. Murray is a versifier of the same type, but with a different orientation. Whereas Miss Graham confines herself for the most part to what is popularly regarded as poetical—natural description, noble sentiments—Miss Murray's is largely an urban muse and she utilises "realistic" scenes—with, however, very much the same effect as Miss Graham secures by her more conventional adherences. In other words, the fundamental conception of poetry is much the same in the minds of each, although it leads the one to describe country scenes



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and the other to graphic reporting of Glasgow streets. Along with these two, as competent versifiers who seldom rise above "magazine verse" level into anything deserving of inclusion even in such an anthology as I postulated in my preceding article—and who, even so, are certainly above the great ruck of living Scottish "poetesses"—may be mentioned Agnes Falconer, Christine Orr, Orgill Cogie, Anne Milne, May W. Fairlie, and, in Braid Scots, Penuel Ross and Barbara Ross M'Intosh.

A niche of her own must be accorded to Mabel Christian Forbes. Her slender output is always peculiarly distinctive and has a different provenance altogether to the great mass of facile verse. It is intensely personal and proceeds from a remote angle of consciousness. It seldom succeeds in carrying complete conviction or achieving full expression—but it has always been profoundly felt and, even where the problem of "communication" has not been solved, an authentic imaginative faculty is obviously in operation. Mabel Christian Forbes, who was, prior to the War, one of the Editorial Committee of *The Blue Blanket*, edited the posthumous volume of Maitland Hardyman's poems.

Isobel W. Hutchison has a much larger tale of accomplishment, and here again there is always a distinctive note. Her books include "Lyrics from West Lothian" and the cantafable, "How Joy was Found" (Messrs Blackie), while a long poem, "The Calling of Bride," appeared in "The Scottish Chapbook," and more recently, Miss Hutchison has written plays and prose of note. Her quality is indicated by the following:—

##### FOR THOSE AT SEA.

The shining starfish and the inspirèd weed  
Shall clamber in your fingers unafraid.  
Your bright astonished eyes shall take their meed  
Of leviathan and the treasure that is laid  
On the floors of ocean. Ye shall never see  
Through the green arteries of the watery deep  
The tedious growth of earth, yet shall ye be  
Charged in her charge, and lapped in Protean sleep  
Your sympathetic hands shall softly move  
With the music of her tides in their ebb and flow.  
Ye shall be part of all that ye did love;

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Mid strange new-fangled dreams lulled to and fro  
In the wake of moons and stars outnumberèd  
Until the unplumbed sea restore her dead.

Along with Miss Hutchison as one of the few contemporary Scottish poetesses who can handle the longer poem to any effect must be mentioned Mary E. Boyle, who also deserves especial mention as by far our best writer of children's verse. There has been no more delightful book of its kind by any Scottish writer since R. L. Stevenson's "Child's Garden of Verses" than Miss Boyle's "Daisies and Apple Trees" (Æneas Mackay, Stirling)—or, at any rate, it must be bracketed with James Guthrie's "A Wild Garden" (Messrs Selwyn and Blount). Miss Mildred Lamb's illustrations to it are equally delightful. "Herodias Inconsolable" (Chelsea Publishing Company) substantiates my first assertion and shows that Miss Boyle can use blank verse to fine and sustained effect.

The twelfth poetess I would mention (claiming for these twelve that they form the second group amongst contemporary Scottish poetesses, the first being confined to Muriel Stuart, Rachael Annand Taylor, Violet Jacob, and Marion Angus) is Helen Cruickshank, who has not yet, I think, published her work in any collected form. The last of my twelve, she is by no means the least, being a vivid versifier with a brilliant colour sense and lively dramatic intuitions. I agree with a friend who says of her Braid Scots poems "the same type as Violet Jacob's and not far behind—maybe with a more sincere basis" (in the sense of applying the Vernacular to her contemporary experience and not in exercises merely in historical accord with the *milieu* in which, ere it almost entirely lapsed from use, it continued to be spoken). And the same friend points out that she is considerably younger than Mrs Jacob.

I have only excluded Miss Barbara Drummond from my twelve because she is younger than any of the others, and her output, so far as it is known to me, is confined to a few poems. But the high promise of these is indubitable; and while the quality of thought they evince is much stronger and deeper than in the work of any of the others, the choice of subject—the old Gaelic myths, treated in no "Celtic twilight" fashion but in a deep Catholic spirit as if Miss Drummond had somehow renewed within herself the traditions of the old Bardic Colleges—suggests that she may yet become a very considerable figure in the Scot-

#### IV.—LADIES' CHOIR.

tish Renaissance Movement. At the opposite pole of our nationality may be mentioned the little handful of poems in Braid Scots which is all that I have seen of the work of "Tamar Faed." They manifest unquestionable promise.

Much younger than Miss Drummond—and one of the most voluminous of contemporary Scottish poetesses—is the Dundee prodigy, Helen Adam, whose much-boomed "*Elfin Pedlar*" was published, with illustrations by the author, by Messrs Hodder and Stoughton in 1923 in a big volume of nearly 150 pages, including an introduction by Dr John A. Hutton. Miss Adam was then twelve years of age. I shall be exceedingly surprised if what poetic faculty she has develops in a fashion leading to work of the slightest real value after the absurd praise lavished on this unfortunate production. She is a Scottish counterpart of the American Hilda Conkling: but it certainly cannot be said of her, as Louis Untermeyer says of Miss Conkling, "Even if with maturity, Hilda never writes another phrase, or worse, writes thousands of them in the prescribed manner, she is to-day a definite and original figure in contemporary poetry." On the other hand it is certainly true that her work, while of the same kind, is, of that kind, a great deal better than that which the great majority of contemporary Scottish versifiers in English write and what the majority of the reading public regard as poetry and often describe as "beautiful words." That is what it is—words, words, words! The beauty is a matter of taste, and definition of the term beauty. But while Miss Adam has written yards of verse of a sort, she has still to write a poem. This in no way detracts from the curiosity of her achievement even as it is at so early an age, but it can be no service to her to describe what she has already done in misleading terms—if she has any real poetic potentiality at all.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT.

### I.—NEWER SCOTTISH FICTION.

It will be the business of one of its protagonists when the Scottish Renaissance Movement begins to make general headway to deal thoroughly with the Kailyaird School of Novelists—Barrie (to whose work I have already referred), "Ian M'Laren," S. R. Crockett and the others down to Joseph Laing Waugh, and so put an end to it. The disease has never been properly diagnosed, and although its evil effects have been recognised and certain steps have been successfully taken to abate them, it is still working widespread if more subterranean mischief. And the direct reaction from Kailyairdism exemplified in George Douglas Brown's "House with the Green Shutters" and J. M'Dougall Hay's "Gillespie" and the like will then be recognised as a mere reversal, the same thing disguised as its opposite. The intuitive unargued recognition has merely resulted in developments in which the essential characteristics of each of these schools have been modified and made more or less innocuous, as in the work of Dr R. W. M'Kenna or "O. Douglas." In other writers an appearance of difference, an illusion of progress, has been secured by a mere change of location in time and place—to the contemporary Scottish city from the rural parish of half-a-century or so ago. This is all that has happened in such a novel "by one of the new Glasgow school" as John Cockburn's "Tenement." Such real genius as Scotland has produced has kept clear of the whole degrading entanglement (except in the case of Brown, whose genius is indubitable and whose novel is carried beyond

its genre by its stupendous and salutary savagery)—and, unfortunately, almost entirely clear of Scotland too. I have already dealt with aspects of this issue in my essay on Cunningham-Grahame. There are three other very diverse Scottish writers who are unquestionably among the most interesting of imaginative prose-writers in English to-day. The greatest of these is Norman Douglas; the other two are F. W. Bain and Kenneth Grahame. These last two might as easily be Martians as Scots, so far as all the superficial elements of their work is concerned. Douglas's work bristles with entertaining *aperçus* on Scottish life and character, which only a Scot, bitterly and bafflingly entangled in his nationality—and, paradoxically, the more bitterly and bafflingly, the more he succeeds in transcending it in most directions—could write. But, as a matter of fact, they are each of them merely fulfilling to the letter what Professor Gregory Smith prophesied Scots genius would contribute to English literature—nothing “central” but strange mosaic work, curious *pastiche*, *tours de force*, stylistic exercises in the absence of that essential (indefinable but yet very definite and always recognisable) substance which is the stuff of great literature in English. They have not fought out their problems in their proper field (Scotland), but have flown them, with the consequence that in the ends of the earth the Thistle clings all the more grotesquely to others and is in no way to be shaken off. They may sublimate it—transform its *bizarre* form into the subtlest spiritual exaggerations or tricks of style—but they cannot minify it. The greatest of such Scots was Herman Melville now belatedly come to his own. “From insanity,” said Plato, “Greece derived its greatest benefits.” “But,” says Raymond Weaver, one of Melville's biographers, “the dull and decent Philistine, untouched by Platonic heresies, justifies his sterility in a boast of sanity. The America in which Melville was born and died was exuberantly and unquestionably ‘sane.’ Its ‘sanity’ drove Irving abroad and made a recluse of Hawthorne. Cooper alone thrived upon it. And of Melville, more ponderous in gifts and more volcanic in energy than any other American writer, it made an Ishmael on the face of the earth.” That America was largely Scottish. Mr Bonney, the American Consul in Edinburgh, has recently been lucubrating about the identity in ethos, despite superficial differences, between America and Scotland. Mr H.

L. Mencken has had a good deal to say on the same subject—but he does not share Mr Bonney's gratitude to Scotland. Nor, as a Scot, do I welcome Mr Bonney's utterances. It is precisely what America and Scotland have in common of this sort that the best elements in both countries are trying to destroy. "The essential thing," says Mr Bechhofer in his "The Literary Renaissance in America," "about the recent American literature with which I propose to deal is that it represents a revolt against the intellectual standards that have for so long dominated American culture. One may accept the current phraseology and label the official philosophy 'Puritanism,' or 'Philistinism'; but the name does not matter. The standards are there." They are at least equally in evidence in Scotland, too, and are practically indistinguishable from their Yankee equivalents. The Scottish Renaissance Movement is tackling with squibs from the other side the same stupendous and unspeakable bond between the two "cultures" as all the younger American writers of the slightest literary consequence are dynamiting from theirs. Calvinism, however "perverted," however snubbed and relegated to the rear, obtrudes as irrepressibly in Norman Douglas's erudite and ecstatic prose as the inveterate indoctrinations of Jesuitism "kyth" in James Joyce's "Ulysses." Douglas is, in fact, a Scottish equivalent of Joyce, operating less demoniacally and on a smaller scale. Unlike Joyce, he had no Scottish literary movement, as Joyce had the Irish literary Renaissance, for a spring-board. But, much more amenably to prevailing morality, Douglas's "South Wind" is a kind of miniature "Ulysses"—if for the Iliad which was Joyce's base we ascribe to Douglas a Ruritanian model. In the inner essence of their styles, if less in the forms of expression in which they clothe them, Douglas and Joyce have a great deal in common—as is not surprising when we remember the kinship of the Scots and the Irish, the Gaelic basis they have in common. They have both the same sensuous interest in the formation of ideas, the same inexhaustible concern with mental processes. Ezra Pound once said: "Most good prose arises from an instinct of negation: the best prose writers choose the only means left them of eliminating (by exact diagnosis) something (the typical mediocrity of contemporary existence) too hideous to be tolerated." That is true—but only of writers belonging

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to nations in which what intelligentsia it has developed suffers from an inferiority complex. It is not true of writers belonging to nations which have succeeded in developing major literary traditions of their own. Pound's mistake arose from his being an American himself. But his dictum explains Irish and Scottish epiphenomena like Joyce and Douglas. Douglas, however, comes from what is predominantly a Protestant country; Joyce from Catholic Ireland. And Douglas out of a country that has been at a literary standstill for the best part of a century so far as the production of work of European consequence is concerned—and Joyce as the end of a renascent movement in Irish literature which, before his emergence, in Yeats and others, had established itself continentally. The stagnancy of Scotland, and its Protestantism, is reflected in the fact that Douglas is largely a product of the Nineties. Gilbert Seldes puts the matter compactly when he says that "it was as Old Believers, the last of Rousseau's faithful in an age corrupted from the pure faith, that the Nineties first appear. With them his melancholy turned at times to pessimism, his doubts to a sceptical languor; one swooned with love of Nature only while walking along the Strand and knew the purity of love only in Leicester Square; and the hysteria which a kindly providence bestowed on Rousseau the last disciples found could be safely and artificially induced. They fled him down the labyrinthine ways, but they embraced him at the gate. For in essence their faith was the same, and the same and most significant in this; that they had faith and believed in the possibility of having faith, and believed in the triumph of whatever fate they held." And then, turning to what we inherit from the Nineties, he says, "We have substituted analysis for introspection, irony for satire, and a spirit of huge, bitter, passionless mockery seems so exclusively appropriate to us that we sometimes overstrain to achieve it. . . . The difference is that for the most part their disillusion hurt them and ours does not." And he goes on to declare that Mr Eliot's "Waste Land" and Joyce's "Ulysses" are the only complete expressions of the spirit which will be modern for the next generation. Douglas is almost completely modern for this one—a wonderful achievement for a Scot. His countrymen who wish an object-lesson on how to "carry over" the unfaced problems of their national conscious-



ness—only to be solved by the production of a centripetal literary tradition of their own—into the literary tradition of another nation in such a fashion as to transform their angularities and lacunae into positive assets, peculiarly attractive at least to the few and for the time being, should take a course in Douglas's writings.

The swifter momentum of English letters to which they have transferred themselves has also carried Bain and Grahame further forward than any Scottish writer in the narrower sense—Bain is perhaps as modern as anything Oriental ever can be; Grahame has brought Arcady down to—not this generation—but certainly last one. The three of them rank in relation to each other in direct ratio to their comparative contemporaneity.

But from the purely Scottish standpoint it is extremely interesting to see how they have carried over into English literature distinctively Scottish qualities—the old “antithesis between the real and the fantastic,” to which I have already referred, “intermingledons,” as Burns called them, those fine frenzies, all that Edwin Muir means when he says that the Scots are less “sane” than the English, the lust of ratiocination, that almost mystical devotion to detail, that delight in “playing with the pieces” they have, who, “unable to comprehend an ordered and lovely system” (or rather unable to belong to it or to devise its like to suit themselves in accordance with their inmost needs) “find their compensation in an abnormal sensitiveness to its momentary and detached manifestations, absorbed in the interest of disparate phenomena, delighted with individual things.” In such conditions great art is impossible: but the art of these three is at least alive—and obviously preliminary to a synthesis which will not be achieved within the field of English literature, since its achievement, if it ever is achieved, will automatically establish Scottish literature in a field of its own.

[Algernon Blackwood, E. L. Grant Watson, the Bones, James and David, and “Benjamin Swift” (W. Romaine Paterson) are other cases in point: and Rebecca West's “The Judge” remains—unfortunately—the best *Scottish* novel of recent years.]

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE.

### II.—NEWER SCOTTISH FICTION.

But—to turn to newer Scottish fiction in the proper sense of the term (for the work of the authors of “Pagan Papers,” “Heifer of the Dawn,” and “South Wind” is not quite recent, and, as I have just indicated, is in lieu of Scottish rather than Scottish work—and the only thing that brings them under my heading is really the novelty of remembering that they are Scots and of considering their work from the point of view of the separate Scottish literary tradition that might have been)—Harold Nicholson, in his monograph on Tennyson says that “what the early twentieth century demands from poetry is a reality of emotional impulse.” I would add that this, compactly put, is what it demands from prose, too; and that none of the younger Scottish writers, with the single exception of Neil Gunn (with whom I have already dealt) is producing work in fiction of the kind that is most distinctive of, and natural to, this generation, or seems to have the slightest inkling of the issues I raised in my last article and in many of my previous ones. All they are doing is repeating in a more or less (and generally less) Scotticized form what the last generation, or previous generations, of fictionists in England and other countries did. None of them are abreast of their times—responding to the current movements in the world of creative art. They are following old-fashioned formulae—filling old bottles and generally with stale wine, or, at the best, with very thin beer of their own brewing.

Mrs Virginia Woolf, in an admirable essay on

"Modern Fiction," gets right to the roots of the matter. Writing of Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, and others, she says: "No single phrase will sum up the charge or grievance which we have to bring against a mass of work so large in its volume and embodying so many qualities, both admirable and the reverse. If we tried to formulate our meaning in one word we should say that these three writers are materialists. It is because they are not concerned with the spirit but with the body that they have disappointed us, and left us with the feeling that the sooner English fiction turns its back upon them, as politely as may be, and marches, if only into the desert, the better for its soul. . . . If we fasten, then, one label on all these books, on which is one word 'Materialists,' we mean by it that they write of unimportant things; that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring. . . . The form of fiction most in vogue more often misses than secures the thing we seek. Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide. Nevertheless, we go on perseveringly, conscientiously, constructing our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds. So much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story is not merely labour thrown away, but labour misplaced to the extent of obscuring and blotting out the light of the conception. Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this.' Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it. It is, at any rate, in some such fashion as this that we seek to define the quality which distinguishes the work of several young writers, among whom Mr James Joyce is the most notable, from that of their predecessors. . . . In contrast with those whom

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we have called materialists, Mr Joyce is spiritual; he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain; and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of these signposts which for generations have served to support the imagination of a reader when called upon to imagine what he can neither touch nor see."

In Scotland we not only provide similar impossible fits in vestments, but we worsen matters by stocking these solely in foreign styles to which the psychology we wish to don them can never become reconciled in any degree whatever. We have evolved no distinctive form, no prose rhythms, no vocabulary adapted to the specific nature of Scottish psychology in its differences from English. The denationalisation of Scottish life and our educational system—the lack of any cultural centre—the absence of literary movements of any kind—the tremendous puritanical and practical bias that afflicts us—all these and other associated factors have prevented the development of any "sense of Scotland," any comprehensive or creative attitude to Scottish life and destiny. They have obtruded between us and our country—between us and our own psychology—a more or less opaque, but always distorting and dimming and minifying film of alienation, of ineffectiveness, of apathy. We are inspissated with hazy and misleading generalisations, which prevent us from seeing clearly and relating effect to cause in any dynamic or vital way. And they have provincialised us. Our best writers in this or that of the various demoded forms we have imported and to some small extent succeeded in naturalising in Scotland are small fry even in comparison with relatively mediocre exponents of the same forms still practising in the South. No contemporary Scottish prose-writer is "taking his country anywhere," or having the slightest real effect. What novels and volumes of short stories do appear have a very temporary and very slight recreative value during the season in which they appear and subsequently in a degree that diminishes to vanishing point in two or three years. There is no progression—no purpose or, at any rate, no result. Of "spirituality" in the sense in which Mrs Woolf uses it—or creative integrity as Joyce exemplifies it—there is not a vestige.

None of our young fictionists have anything to say. I am not pleading for propaganda or didacticism—some of them manifest one or other or both of these in various directions—but deploring an utter absence of significance, of fundamental purpose. And as to their outlook on their art, and the methods upon which they construct their novels or their sketches, almost without exception they seem to me to have taken some correspondence course in the “Art of Fiction” (“Make money while you learn”) or to have set out deliberately to produce a best-seller, pandering to what they thought the public wanted—as if best-sellers were not always the purest of flukes! In short, there is a hideous mixture of imitativeness and commercialism, with an utter absence of aesthetic consciousness.

I do not propose to enumerate all our younger novelists and short-story writers. Perhaps the most important was (I put it in the past tense because it was an importance of promise which has not been since realised) Mr James Bryce, whose extraordinarily unequal “Story of the Ploughboy” showed at least a man with a personality of his own and a deep experience of various kinds of life, and which contained, amongst much that was stilted and completely unreal, passages of altogether uncommon power, quite equal to the best in George Douglas Brown. The thrashing of a lice-ridden “loon” by a hind under the excitation of a sadistic young woman remains in my memory after several years for its sheer completeness: and there were other elements in that book—a getting away from stock-conceptions, an independent attitude to Scotland, a knowledge of and ability to describe aspects of Scottish life and scenery which had not been used before—which make it well worth the while of young Scots to read. I have already alluded to Mr Cockburn’s “Tenement”—a purely “machine-made” naturalistic “study” of Glasgow of the kind that old-fashioned people still call, and regard as, realistic. It was a first novel, and the author may yet do better work, if he realises the need for sincerity, acquires a measure of maturity, and ceases to try to shock people or to simulate tragedy by piling “atrocities” on top of each other. Any genuine attempt to see Glasgow as it is, and to put down the results in fictional form or otherwise, is certainly to be welcomed. The overwhelming urban developments of Scottish life have scarcely yet given rise to any attempted literature. The late Sheriff

Lyell's Edinburgh novels, "The Justice Clerk," and the "House in Hanover Square" are restricted—in so far as they have any contact with life at all—to a very narrow class of character. Miss Agnes Stewart may be right when she says that "there is some good film-stuff in 'The Justice Clerk.'" That certainly indicates the level of the work. On a much higher plane was the novel, "The Virgin Wife" (1925) by John Carruthers—like "Tene-ment" a first production—an ill-constructed story, full of immaturities, but distinctly promising. "The author," as one critic pointed out, "has wisely cast to the winds the foolish old convention that the last page should gather up all the loose threads, kill off all the unsavoury people, and marry the hero to his divinely-matched affinity. Peter Trevena's marriage occurs in the middle of the novel, and the end of the story, although it marks the close of one phase of his life, no more settles all the problems which have arisen during its course than would any given moment of actual life. . . . As a study of one aspect of Glasgow life, the picture of Trevena's lodgings could not well be bettered." Along with Mr Carruthers and Mr Cockburn, as belonging to the new Glasgow school, may be mentioned Miss Dot Allan, with "The Syrens" (some of her more recent work in the form of short sketches has reached a much higher level); Mrs Catherine Carswell with "Open the Door," a deft but superficial study in personalities; John Ressich, a short story writer and occasional essayist of power; George Woden, whose "Little Houses" had real literary merit of an unobtrusive sort; and Patrick Miller, whose "The Natural Man" is one of the best "realistic" war-novels we have had. Edinburgh may be credited, alongside these, with Augustus Muir and Bruce Marshall; St Andrews with Gilbert Watson; and Aberdeen with Agnes Mure Mackenzie. As *précieuse* the latter is the most distinguished of the lot and has a volume of studies of "Shakespeare's Women" and another of verse to her credit. But none of them are really "sizeable" yet, or, in any way, showing signs of becoming representative national figures.

There are two others who may be classed as belonging to the Glasgow school, but deserve rather fuller mention. These are George Blake and J. M. Reid. Robert Angus, writing in *The Scottish Nation*, put the whole issue in regard to contemporary Scottish fiction very succinctly



when he said: "Setting aside the purely commercial type of fiction, the novel in Scotland is to-day limited to a few followers of the Stevenson-Neil Munro tradition, and the series of women writers like Mrs Carswell, Miss Allan and O. Seton, who derive all from Annie Swan, without her 'uplift' and her genius for banal narrative, though with considerably more conscious, if not always successful, effort after psychology and style. There is no one to-day writing a Scots novel even of the very questionable merits of Crockett's, Ian Maclaren's, or Barrie's for the simple reason that, with the mobilisation of output under the now commercialised system, the novel writer has to write for a buying public, and as eighty per cent. of that public is English or Anglicised, the novelist must avoid like the devil anything that would look real, any attempt to depart from Scottish types as fixed by English humour or exiled sentiment." "To me," he continues, "George Blake's 'Mince Collop Close' is simply inexplicable. If it were the work of the confessed mass-producer of fiction one would silently condemn it to the limbo recognised for such. But Mr Blake is a notable figure in Scottish literature. He has some extremely fine prose to his credit, and he has written 'The Mother'"; and he proceeds to expose the hopeless crudity, the incredible melange of impossibilities in "Mince Collop Close." He then turns to J. M. Reid's "Sons of Aethne"—a story of Scotland in the days before Kenneth Macalpine—"but it is all in shadowland amid the half-lights in which puppets play; not all Mr Reid's art will persuade us that they are real; they elude us, incomprehensible because there is nothing to comprehend—where the old legends scored so heavily was that they came out of the earth strong and vital; they were universal, primary, essential—Mr Reid's recension is book-learning, precious, pretty, artistry not art." I have nothing to add to these extracts; both Mr Blake and Mr Reid ought to be potent figures in the Scottish literary movement. Neither of them is. Why? "Both," says Mr Angus, "are afraid and so both are insincere. Mr Blake ran away from the facts. Mr Reid never had any facts at all. . . . If there is to be a Scottish novel, let it be Cowcaddens or Cathcart, Carnoustie or a clachan in an outer isle, but let it be the real, which is not merely the actual, but its spiritual interpretation. It won't sell that type of novel, it won't be praised, and it won't make its author any more popular;



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for half Scotland to-day, the Scotland of Harry Lauder and Burns' orations, is unreal and will fight to the death for its unreality, but it will be worth doing." No more than that need be said, save perhaps to add that, in the Stevenson-Neil Munro tradition, the best work is being done, perhaps, by John Sillars in his increasing—but scarcely progressive—tale of Arran novels; while excellent historical novels of their kind are Edward Albert's "Kirk o' Field" and Winifred Duke's "Scotland's Heir," a striking picture of the days of the '45 Rebellion which has evoked an encomium from Hugh Walpole. But it is not merely historical novels that are wanted but novels which, whatever their location in time and place, will be distinctively Scottish in the deepest sense (and, apart from externals of Scottish chronicle either of the above might have been located anywhere else in Europe or written as they stand by a writer of almost any nationality) and will *make history* in a fashion that the whole tale of Scottish novels since "The House with the Green Shutters" has completely failed to do.

## CHAPTER FORTY.

### CONCLUSION.

#### I.

The Burns Movement—The Next Step? Within the past year or so the Burns Cult, with its world-wide clubs, has been rapidly reorienting itself, and has put the revival of the Vernacular in the forefront of its programme. It is becoming to an increasing extent a Scottish literary and national movement and not just an organisation for maintaining an Annual Dinner and orgy of indiscriminate eulogy, and for the bibliographical and antiquarian study and preservation of Burnsiana. It may be that through a new address to Burns' great ideal of Universal Brotherhood the Scottish psychology will yet realise in a higher fashion than is connoted in mere ubiquity or even in success in commerce and engineering its world-function, and become, not merely cosmopolitan, but—they are part and parcel of each other, and opposed to cosmopolitanism or imperialism—national and international. Alongside this reorientation has come a new attitude to Burns himself—not the old stupid provincial idolatry, but a reconsideration of his place and power on purely literary grounds. The new disposition of the activities of the Cult is attracting a new type of speaker and writer of a higher cultural calibre. It is becoming widely recognised that the day is past for rehashing the personalia—rewhitewashing or redenigrating the Bard—and that the time has come to consider his quality and methods as a poet, his comparative international status, the influence he has had on Scottish life and letters, the way in which he handled the

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Vernacular, to appreciate his limitations as well as his powers, and to resume him into his proper historical setting and see him in that. The application of modern critical methods to Burns and his work cannot be long delayed. In the meantime, there is a decreasing inclination to abide by his practice in regard to the Vernacular and in regard to verse-forms and subject-matter. So far as Vernacular Revival is concerned, the majority of Scots interested in it are still almost hopelessly handicapped by their ignorance of European literary history. They have a great deal to learn, for example, from the *landsmaal* movement in Norway, the Catalan movement, and the way in which Russian was made a complete, and perhaps unparalleled, literary medium no longer ago than the nineteenth century—and especially perhaps from the *zaumny* and *skaz* experiments of such recent Russian writers as Khlébnikov and Remizov. The idea of a synthetic Scots is rapidly gaining ground, however, amongst the younger intellectuals; it is significant to find School and College magazines begin to appear, wholly or partially, in Braid Scots—this although few or no questions in regard to Scottish literature are set in examination-papers and Scottish classics are not available in handy form for school use. Educational publishers realise, however, that the demand is growing—that increasing numbers of Scottish school children and students are studying the Scottish language and literature outwith school hours—and that it is high time the Scottish Board of Education allocated a compartment in every school and training centre time-table to these subjects. In the meantime, commercial caution is causing them to wait in the hope that some such definite rearrangement will be made and that every examination-paper will contain at least one question on Scottish language and literature. But the movement is developing, and if the educational authorities do not move in keeping with it, the time may speedily come when educational publishers will be prepared to inaugurate series of Scottish national text-books without any such official guarantee. A few “die-hards,” such as Alexander Keith, adjudicating as Scots assessors at Musical Festivals, are still to be heard enjoining their auditors to “be careful not to mix their dialects”—in other words, not to work back from the bits to the whole; not to enrich Scots as English and most other languages have enriched themselves. The

tercentenary of the death of Luis de Gongora y Argote falls to be observed next year (1927), and Mr Keith and his friends may be advised to perpend, and apply to the Scottish position to-day, what Laurie Magnus, a sufficiently Conservative writer, says of him in his "Dictionary of European Literature": "Gongora's 'vice' was to play with the words themselves; to introduce strange words; to use forced combinations; somehow and, ultimately, anyhow, to cause surprise by unexpectedness, and thus to attain to a style so obscure, so allusive, so much involved, as to perplex even the learned audience of cultivated linguists to whom his poems were addressed. What was the object of it in the first place? Plainly, no poet of genius would practise Gongorism out of sheer malice; and Gongora's purpose was clearly enough to supple and diversify the resources of the literary language of Spain. It was capable of extension and enlargement; of Grecisms, Latinisms, Italicisms; of borrowings of vocabulary and construction from languages which had proved themselves capable of a more perfect literature than Spain had yet produced. In a sense Meredith was a Gongorist, as Rabelais had been before him; and though all obscurity is not Gongorism, all Gongorism is obscure. Every great writer who is dissatisfied with the powers of the language in which he writes, who finds some words worn by use and others inadequate for emphasis, and who tries to supply such shortcomings by new formations or new combinations, is doing work which will bear future fruit, however much ridicule it may arouse in the present by its more or less violent breach with current usage. A Gongorist is strictly an altruist, though his conscious motives may be mixed. He is risking contemporary misunderstanding, even personal obloquy, for the sake of enriching the inheritance which he administers in his generation."

And that, so far as the Vernacular is concerned, is the course to which Scottish literature is at last—and, happily, without being too late—committed, despite the protestations of its stick-in-the-muds.

## II.

So much for the Burns Cult!

Is it desirable that there should be a return, especially on the part of the Scottish people, to Scott? Efforts are

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being made in certain quarters to revive interest in his work, and, in particular, the *Waverley Novels*. Very diverse writers have recently been claiming that he is greater than Burns, with the implication that Scott and Burns ought to be drastically regraded in popular esteem. It is noteworthy, however, that the writers in question (scarcely one of whom, incidentally, is even a second-ranker either as critic or creator) are all either English or Anglo-Scottish litterateurs (meaning by Anglo-Scottish litterateurs writers whose reputations, such as they are, are bound up with the English literary tradition rather than with the quite distinct, if admittedly infinitely inferior, Scots literary tradition). The movement to reinstate Scott in critical esteem and popular regard must therefore be regarded as one designed to conserve and reinforce certain elements in English culture, while taking it for granted that Scotland and England have identical cultural interests. But should this be taken for granted?

English literature to-day may be tending in directions that are undesirable in themselves or, at all events, at variance with its great central traditions; and some such corrective as that which has spontaneously generated this re-appreciation of Scott (or some qualities in Scott) in certain quarters, may be required. To these central traditions of English literature as distinct from Scottish, the bulk of Scott—all but an almost infinitesimal residuum—may, or rather must, be conceded; Burns, on the other hand, belongs mainly to Scots literature. At the moment when, belatedly, tendencies, however tentative to a Scottish Literary Revival, are manifesting themselves, it is peculiarly necessary to ensure that English literary traditions are not recouping themselves by means which are likely to prevent the emergence of the diametrically opposed tendencies upon which the development of distinctively Scottish literature depends. In Scotland itself, at any rate, there should be jealousy to see, since distinctively English forces have so long and so tremendously dominated British literature, that the continued paramountcy of the Southern partner in our most unequal alliance is not any longer ensured by any failure to detect and urge the specific, if contrary, interests of those purely Scottish elements which may have the potentiality of liberating forces capable in the long run of redressing the cultural balance between the two nations.

## CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH STUDIES

What factors have been responsible for developing a very great literature in England and a very meagre one in Scotland? Upon the answer to this question depends the question of whether a "Back to Scott" movement is politic in Scotland to-day. It is noteworthy that Mr Baldwin, Lord Sands, Mr John Buchan, and Sheriff Jameson (all, be it noted, politically at variance with that strongest factor in Scottish politics which is vetoed and denied expression by the overwhelming English Conservative majority at Westminster) who have recently been eulogising Scott—eulogies generally accompanied by a depreciation of distinctively contemporary tendencies in literature—have done so in an almost nakedly reactionary manner, with their eye on certain social and political effects rather than upon cultural goods. They are not advancing any new view of Scott—any special applicability to the present and the future of elements in Scott hitherto overlooked or misprized. On the contrary, they have been praising him anew for the very qualities for which he has always been praised—his "large sanity," his "commonsense," his judicial blend of the educative and the entertaining. The claim that Scott is greater than Burns, advanced by Mrs Virginia Woolf and others, takes its rise from like considerations in the minds of more purely literary and more wholly English people who seek a neo-classical movement.

From the point of view of the Scottish Renaissance Movement, however, these very qualities of Scott's are those which, in unique disproportion in our race, have prevented our developing those imaginative and purely artistic qualities which might have produced a Scots literature proportionate to English, and which, while gaining us a reputation even in our own minds for shrewdness, economy, and industry, have robbed Scotland of the backbone of its population, given us the worst slums in Europe, and filled them with aliens, and handed over vast areas of our country to soap-kings and pickle-manufacturers as sports-grounds—a transformation of Scotland not quite compensated for by a fatuous love of country wholly divorced from realities. The two things go together; and the angle from which all interested in the movement for the revival of Scottish Nationalism will naturally scrutinize Scott to-day is that indicated by Mr Edwin Muir, where he says, "Scott achieved classical

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prose, prose with the classical qualities of solidity, force, and measure, only when he wrote in the Scottish dialect; his Scottish dialogue is great prose, and his one essay in Scottish imaginative literature, 'Wandering Willie's Tale,' is a masterpiece of prose, of prose which one must go back to the seventeenth century to parallel." From the point of view of pure art, Scott's Anglicisation—and those principles which drove him into those methods of composition which gave us the Waverley Novels—represents the greatest loss Scottish literature has sustained in its chequered course; under happier circumstances he might almost have been to it what Shakespeare is to English. Personally, I would gladly scrap the whole of the rest of his output for a dozen such Tales.

It is, at all events, significant to note that the point of view of the Scottish Renaissance Movement in regard to Scott coincides with that of the two great contemporary European critics, Georg Brandes and Croce, and is at complete variance with that of Lord Sands, Sheriff Jameson, and others. Croce and Brandes are the opposite poles of European criticism—they approach Scott from entirely different directions—but come to identical conclusions, as all real literary critics must. Political, social, moral, and other extraneous elements have corrupted the literary criticism of John Buchan, Virginia Woolf and others, competent enough in a very minor degree on subjects where they can discard such "blinkers." No doubt Lord Sands—and perhaps Sheriff Jameson—think their opinions quite as important, if not more so, than Croce's or Brandes'. It is useless to discuss the matter.

So far as Scott is concerned, Brandes sums him up by saying that he is the kind of author whom "every adult has read, and no grown-up person can read." Croce also describes his work as unreadable, but ends with an appeal for mercy, on the ground that a writer who delighted our parents and grand-parents "does not deserve harsh treatment from their children and grandchildren." This is an appeal we would be more ready to respond to if reactionary people in our own country were not always using him to whip up popular sentiment and prejudice against new creative tendencies. But neither Croce nor Brandes has anything to say about Scott as a poet. It never occurred to them that at this time of day any sane person would



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consider him as such. That high distinction is left for Sheriff Jameson.

I need say nothing of the R. L. Stevenson movement, "run" by such people as Mr J. Mullo Weir and Miss Rosaline Masson; it is analogous to the Burns and Scott Cults but feebler and more futile—as are the other imitative glorifications of poetasters like Tannahill. There is, and can be, little in any of these "stunts" beneficial to Scottish arts and affairs.

### III.

One of the most amusing things that has happened recently in Scotland was the burning in effigy of Dr Pittendrigh Macgillivray by the Glasgow art students! Why? What had the splendid old gladiator done? He had ventured to ask if art in Glasgow had suffered a lapse. Even so he commented on the fashion in which art flourished in Glasgow as against a region (Edinburgh) where little productive work could be done in a sterilising atmosphere of social precedence and the bible of "Who's Who." But stood Glasgow where it did in art-life forty years ago; in the fighting days of the old "Gluepots" and the young "Glasgow Green" boys; the extraordinary and redoubtable warrior, Craibe Angus; and the extra-militant "Scottish Art Review" of the first issues? Had it not gone under a little? Instead of a brilliant coterie of about a dozen firebrands, nearly every one of whom made his autographic firemark on the Scottish art-log of his time, they had now, like every other big city in the country, a huge art-school, and, as a result, the illuminated among them must surely admit they had a tiresome plethora of petty picture-makers, many of whom were as clever and slick as they were vacuous.

Dr Macgillivray was, of course, right. The Art Schools are doing in their field just what the Musical Festivals are doing in theirs, and Miss Marjorie Gullan's lachrymose poetry-reading movement (under the patronage of English poetasters) is doing in a contiguous one, and what the Scottish Folk Dance Society is doing in another (since the old movements are simply an acquired accomplishment, not a spontaneous or natural manifestation of contemporary psychology).

"Art Schools are not, and seem unlikely ever to be," said Dr Macgillivray in a subsequent communication to

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*The Glasgow Herald*, "in effect, what was expected. The education business—School Board and University—all round is little better than a beautifully painted balloon, the pricking of which is about due."

"It has always been held," says A. S. Neill, "that Scotland is far in advance of England in education. The Englishman who refuses to allow a Scot a sense of humour grudgingly admits that Scotland is better educated than England, and according to our present interpretation of education, Scotland certainly is. Scotland's success in Leaving Certificates, University Prelims., M.A. Degrees, is great. Any village cobbler will tell you that 'M.A.'s in Scotland are as common as dugs gaen' bare-fut.' Surely we are an instructed nation. But the disturbing question arises—Is an M.A. educated? . . . Let us be honest and confess that our boasted Scottish Education is only learning. Let us be bold enough to say that our Leavings and M.A. standard is a curse. It is a curse, for it conveys a subtle sense of finality: 'I've graduated; I'm an educated man.' But even from the narrow point of view of learning, an M.A. Degree is a very little thing. . . . I willingly admit that England has a similar standard of education. But the protest against education in the South is stronger than in the North. Experimental schools, so-called, are more popular in England. England is going ahead, while Scotland rests on its Leavings oars. I grant you that the experimental school is usually a timid attempt to patch up the old Ford. It clutches the Dalton Plan to its heart, dimly realising that the Dalton Plan is only a trick to make the old education look attractive. Nevertheless the experimental school has shown many advances—there is no punishment, no reward; the child is free to be natural, although not to send Mathematics to the Devil; and there is a strong desire to make education fit the child and not to make the child fit education. When I was lecturing in a Scots city at Christmas, a doctor friend said to me: 'In this town is a headmaster who beats the children frightfully.' Again and again I have his pupils come to me suffering from neurosis, but I cannot do anything. The law is on his side; he is allowed to punish! I told my friend that in Holland, Germany, and Austria, when teachers asked me if we still had corporal punishment in Scotland, I felt miserable in answering that we had. In these countries a teacher dare not strike a pupil.

The pity is, not that there are teachers in Scotland who leather, but that public opinion in Scotland is indifferent to such methods. Education in Scotland is merely a displaced Calvinism. The E.I.S. discusses salaries, but it does not discuss child psychology. The educational paper of Scotland has more interest in Geography than in behaviour. And it may be Calvinism that prevents Scotland from seeing that creation is of more importance than learning; for Calvinism had not much use for art at any time. But modern psychology has shown us that emotion, not intellect, is the driving force in life. A child expresses emotion in making a boat, but not in working out a problem in Euclid. It is in creation that Scottish education fails lamentably. There is about half-an-ounce of creation in the Higher Leavings. True there are woodwork departments where boys learn to mortise, where each lad makes his correct pen-tray, instead of making his boat a kite. Creation must have absolute freedom of choice at all times. . . . So long as Scotland is proud of her education, so long she will remain behind in the things that matter. When she asks herself the question, What is education? and cannot answer it, then will she be on the way to progress. For no one can say what education is. The whole trend of the new movement is to wipe out our adult ideas about what children ought to learn and do. We do not know what a child ought to learn and do. Our education together with European education brought the War. Less boldly one can at least claim that education did not prevent the War. We have failed to clean our civilisation of slums and prostitution and crime and robbery, and when we set out to tell a child how to live and what to learn we are humbugs and fools. We do not know where a child is going, and yet we attempt to guide him. We do not know what is right and what is wrong, and yet we teach children morals. We are all humbugs, and our Leavings and Degrees make us dangerous humbugs, for they make us fancy that we speak with authority. The only possible way in education is to stand by, and allow the child to learn what he likes. Compulsion, in the form of punishment, moral suasion, Leaving Certificates, time-tables, belongs to yesterday. The education of to-morrow will be free. It hurts me to think that England's vision is wider than that of my own country."

And, on the top of that, Scots who still boast of the

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virtues of Scottish education, may well be asked to read William Bolitho's "Cancer of Empire," and prove their worth by devising a solution for the appalling problems of the Glasgow backlands (unamenable to any solution within the limits of the existing economic system) depicted there. Not only have we almost unparalleled slum problems in Scotland, greater unemployment than in England, and a continuous drain of emigration which is removing the best of our stock, but our rural problem is an unspeakable scandal. A recent writer on "Scotland To-day" in the *Observer* (there was a brief spell of unusual interest in Scottish affairs in the London Press about a year ago—as a rule there is none; Irish letters, like Paris letters, flourish, but who ever heard of a Scottish letter?) puts the last in a nutshell:—"Suppose that the sporting rights were bought out, lock, stock, and barrel, and the Highlands thrown open to the recreation of Scotland and of all the world? Suppose that they were thronged with the holiday traffic that fills Switzerland and Norway and swarms over the French Pyrenees? The deer and the grouse would be gone, and their respective slayers, and the rents which they pay, and there would be a big hole in the rate-book. But would no 'rateable values' arise to fill the void? I have never heard that Switzerland was other than a 'business proposition.' The well-equipped Pyrenees are always extending their tourist accommodation, and the prosperity engendered by cheap catering in Norway is equally significant. But it is clear that the eviction by purchase of the sporting interest would leave the way open for a tripartite Highland economy of crofting, forestry, and recreation. The crofts would be greatly enriched by an extension of pasture; afforestation would develop the kind of settlements where the convenience of the pedestrian, the cyclist, and the general tourist would be most easily provided; and the three interests would dovetail into each other as they do in every country where the same conditions exist. And what about the money? A Departmental Committee reported in 1921 that the total assessed rental of the deer forests was £119,543. Before the War it was £171,438, and it is apt to vary according to the economic weather and the fluctuations of American taste. To put the matter in the least favourable light, let us call it £200,000. There is no available aggregate for grouse shootings, but it is less, the Committee tell us, than

that of the forests. Call it another £200,000. Salmon fishings account for less than £80,000—a figure I should have rejected as too low, had it not been carefully worked out for me by the best possible authority. The whole thing lies within the compass of an annual sum of half-a-million—scarcely a camel to swallow where modern public finance is confronted with a question of national policy. There I leave the case with only two observations: I have been astonished at the number of responsible people in Scotland who described the sporting interest as a 'curse,' agreed in principle with the policy suggested, and were at first incredulous of the limited cost. And I believe the political and social psychology of Scotland will never be stable till this 'tooth' comes out."

But I would invite Scottish interest in even more far-reaching proposals—those of Major C. H. Douglas, which may well be discerned in retrospect as having been one of the great contributions of re-oriented Scottish genius to world-affairs. His constructive proposals, says A. R. Orage, "concern mainly the only practically important question asked by every consumer—the question of price; and beyond a change in our present price-fixing system, there is in his proposals nothing remotely revolutionary. For the rest, everything would go on as now. There would be no expropriation of anybody, no new taxes, no change of management in industry, no new political party; no change, in fact, in the status or privileges of any of the existing factors of industry. Absolutely nothing would be changed but prices. But what a change would be there! Major Douglas's calm assumption is that from to-morrow morning, as the shops open, the prices of all retail articles could be marked down by at least a half and thereafter progressively reduced, say, every quarter—and not only without bankrupting anybody, but at an increasing profit to everybody without exception. Absolutely nobody need suffer that everybody should be gratified. All that would happen to anybody is that the purchasing power of whatever money they have would be doubled to-morrow, and thereafter continuously increased. Not to put too great a strain upon credulity or suspense, I may explain here that the principle of the proposal is perfectly simple, and it consists in this—that prices ought to fall as our communal powers of production increase."

I do not intend here to detail or discuss Major

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Douglas's proposals any further; but—while under no more delusion than Orage himself as to the probability of sufficient brain-power developing in Great Britain or elsewhere in the next century to put the Douglas System into operation—I want to record my unqualified pride and joy in the fact that of all the people in the world a Scotsman—one of the race which has been (and remains) most hag-ridden by commercial Calvinism, with its hideous doctrines of the "need to work," "the necessity of drudgery," and its devices of thrift and the whole tortuous paraphernalia of modern capitalism—should have absolutely "got to the bottom of economics" and shown the way to the Workless State.

### IV.

Finally, it may be observed that in the conclusion of his preface to his "Dictionary of European Literature," Laurie Magnus says: "It would be interesting to try to discover from this comparative study a clue to the *future* of European literature. It has made its way through so many inhibitions, ecclesiastical and civil, that the problem of the course it will pursue after the last war of liberation from authority is particularly fascinating. Changing values need not be disappearing values, and the real interest of the lives of Abelard, Dante, Reuchlin, Tasso, Rabelais, More, Corneille, Milton, Heine—to name a few among many—does not lie in the stones in their path, but in the path which they carved through the stones. The mind of Europe has found expression, despite obstacles and obscurantism, and its greater freedom in the present century will not be strange to the voices of the past. Possibly, the new renaissance will spring in one of the smaller countries, redeemed or restored in recent years."

Oswald Spengler hazards a similar speculation. May it not be in Scotland that the next great Culture will arise? There can, at all events, be no doubt that if an adequate group of the younger Scottish authors and artists who are now manifesting themselves got together and determined to take up the distinctive threads of Scottish culture where the Union severed them—to undo the work of the eighteenth century, and, to a large extent, of the reformation—and to develop their arts and affairs in accordance with Scottish psychology without reference to England—the resolution of the diverse inhibitions which

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have so long and so completely restricted Scottish genius (a resolution they could hardly fail to accomplish in adequate measure if they made it, and no other, their conscious objective) would disclose a more important world-destiny for Scotland than even to keep on supplying England with its materialistic brains—a destiny more in keeping with the world-estimate of the Scottish genius than the actual condition of affairs from which that is derived.



## BOOKS TO READ.

[The following books—by no means a complete list—are suggested as affording a basis for an understanding of the past and present position of Scottish arts and affairs in their relation to each other, or for the further study of some of the special issues touched upon in the foregoing chapters. Titles already mentioned in the text have, however, not been repeated in this list.]

### ART.

Scottish Painters, a Critical Study, by Walter Armstrong (London, 1888).

History of Art in Scotland: Its Origin and Progress, by Robert Brydall (Blackwood, 1889).

Modern Scottish Portrait Painters, with an Introductory Essay by Percy Bate (Edinburgh, 1910).

### BIBLIOGRAPHY AND PRINTING.

Annals of Scottish Printing from the Introduction of the Art in 1507 to the Beginnings of the Seventeenth Century, by Robert Dickson and John Philip Edmond (Cambridge, 1890).

A List of Books Printed in Scotland before 1706, including those printed furth of the Realm for Scottish Booksellers, by Harry G. Aldis. (Printed for Edinburgh Bibliographical Society, 1904.)

Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Publications (Bibliographies of Mary Queen of Scots, the Darien Scheme, Aberdeen Universities, Solemn League and Covenant, Burns, Holyrood and Rae Presses, etc.)

A Bibliography of Middle Scots Poets, by Wm. Geddie, M.A. (Scottish History Society, 1912).

Records of Glasgow Bibliographical Society.

A Catalogue of the Publications of Scottish Historical and Kindred Clubs and Societies, and of the volumes relative to Scottish History, issued by H.M. Stationery Office, 1780-1908, by Professor Charles Sanford Terry (Maclehose, 1909).

Bibliotheca Scotica (Messrs John Smith & Co., Glasgow, 1926).

Typographia Scoto-Gadelica (1567-1917), by Donald Maclean (Edinburgh, 1915).

### LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

Scottish Chap-Book Literature, by William Harvey (Paisley, 1903).

The Devotional Literature of Scotland, by Rev. Dr Adam Philip (London).

## BOOKS TO READ.

- Records of Early Drama in Scotland, by Anna J. Mill (St Andrews University—now being printed).
- The Story of the Scots Stage, by Robb Lawson (Paisley, 1917).
- Scottish Literature, by Professor G. Gregory Smith (Macmillan, 1919).
- Specimens of Middle Scots with Historical Introduction and Glossarial Notes, by Professor Gregory Smith (Blackwood, 1902).
- Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, by Henry Grey Graham (Black, 1908).
- Manual of Modern Scots, with Glossary by Wm. Grant and Dixon Scott (Cambridge Press, 1921).
- "For Puir Auld Scotland's Sake" (Literary Essays), by "Hugh Haliburton" (1887).
- In Scottish Fields (Literary Essays), by "Hugh Haliburton" (1890).
- Scottish Vernacular Literature, by T. F. Henderson (1898).
- The Literature of the Highlands, by Magnus Maclean (Blackie, 1925).
- A Literary History of Scotland, by Professor J. H. Millar (Unwin, 1903).
- Scottish Prose of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, by Professor J. H. Millar (Unwin, 1912).
- The Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland, by James A. H. Murray (1873).
- The Dialect of Robert Burns as spoken in Central Ayrshire, by Sir James Wilson, K.C.S.I. (Oxford Press, 1923).
- An Etymological Glossary of the Shetland and Orkney Dialect, by Thomas Edmonston (Edinburgh, 1866).
- Old Shetland Dialect and Placenames of Shetland, by Dr Jakob Jakobsen (Lerwick, 1926).
- An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language, by John Jamieson, D.D. (1840, and subsequent editions).
- Desultory Notes on Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary, by J. B. Montgomerie-Fleming (Glasgow, 1910).
- A Dictionary of Lowland Scots, by Charles Mackay, LL.D. (Ballantyne Press, 1888).
- A Scottish Dialect Dictionary, by Rev. Alex. Warrack, M.A. with Introduction and Dialect Map, by William Grant, M.A. (Chambers, 1911).

## BOOKS TO READ.

**The Scottish Tongue**, by W. A. Craigie, John Bulloch, Peter Giles, and J. M. Bulloch, with Foreword by Wm. Will (Cassell, 1924).

**Lowland Scotch as Spoken in the Lower Strathearn District of Perthshire**, with Dictionary, by Sir James Wilson (Oxford Press, 1915).

**Roxburghshire Word Book**, by George Watson (Oxford Press, 1924).

**The Royal Stuarts in their Connection with Art and Letters**, by W. G. Blaikie Murdoch (Edinburgh, 1908).

**Three Centuries of Scottish Literature (from the Reformation to Scott)**, by Hugh Walker, 2 Vols. (Macmillan, 1893).

**Studies in Prefixes and Suffixes in Middle Scottish**, by Elizabeth Westergaard (Oxford Press, 1924).

## EDUCATION.

**History of the Burgh Schools of Scotland**, by James Grant (Collins, 1876).

**Scottish Education, School and University, from Early Times to 1908**, with an addendum 1908-1913, by J. Kerr (Cambridge Press, 1913).

**A History of Secondary Education in Scotland to the Act of 1908**, by John Strong (1909).

## MUSIC.

**Musical Scotland, a Dictionary of Scottish Musicians from 1400 onwards**, with a Bibliography of Musical Publications connected with Scotland from 1611, by David Baptie (Paisley, 1894).

**The Highland Bagpipe: Its History, Literature and Music**, with Bibliography, etc., by W. L. Manson (Paisley, 1901).

## PHILOSOPHY.

**Scottish Philosophy in its National Development**, by Professor Henry Laurie (Maclehose, 1902).

## HISTORY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS.

**A History of the Working Classes in Scotland**, by Thomas Johnston, M.P. (Forward Publishing Co., Ltd.).

**The Scottish Staple at Veere**, by John Davidson and Alexander Gray (Longmans, 1909).

**Commercial Relations of England and Scotland, 1603-1707**, by T. Keith (Cambridge Press, 1910).

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- The Industries of the Clyde Valley During the War*, by W. R. Scott and J. Cunnison (Oxford Press, 1924).
- Spanish Influence in Scottish History*, by Professor John Elder (Maclehose, 1920).
- Our Noble Families*, by Thomas Johnston, M.P. (Forward Publishing Co., Ltd.).
- Highland Reconstruction: A Survey of the Problems*, by H. F. Campbell (Glasgow, 1920).
- The Industries of Scotland*, by David Bremner (Black, 1869).
- The Constitutional History of Scotland, to the Reformation*, by James and James A. R. Mackinnon (Longmans, 1924).
- The History of Civilisation in Scotland*, by John Mackintosh, 4 Vols. (Paisley, 1892-96).
- The Intellectual Development of Scotland*, by Hector Macpherson (Hodder & Stoughton, 1911).
- An Outline of the Relations between England and Scotland (500-1707)*, by Professor R. S. Rait (Blackie, 1901).
- The Parliaments of Scotland*, by Professor R. S. Rait (Maclehose, 1924).
- An Essay on the Economic Effects of the Reformation*, by G. O'Brien (1923).
- The Scottish Parliament Before the Union of the Crowns*, by Professor R. S. Rait (Blackie, 1901).
- Thoughts on the Union between England and Scotland*, by Professors A. V. Dicey and R. S. Rait (Macmillan, 1920).
- The Union of England and Scotland: A Study in International History*, by James Mackinnon (Longmans, 1896).
- The Early History of the Scottish Union Question*, by G. W. T. Omond (Edinburgh, 1897).
- The Union of 1709*, by various writers, with Introduction by Professor Hume Brown (Glasgow, 1907).
- Rural Scotland During the War*, by D. T. Jones, Joseph F. Duncan, H. M. Conacher and W. R. Scott (Humphrey Milford, 1926).

## THEOLOGY.

- Theology in Scotland (Reviewed by a Heretic)*, by Alexander Webster (Lindsey Press, 1915).
- Puritanism in the Scottish Church*, by W. S. Provand (1923).
- Religion Since the Reformation*, by L. Pullan (1923).
- Celtic Mythology and Religion*, by A. MacBain (1917).

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